

***THE SEARCH  
FOR CAPTAIN SLOCUM***

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for*

CAPTAIN SLOCUM

*A BIOGRAPHY*

*by* WALTER MAGNES TELLER



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***To Jane***





*This is a world in which each of us, knowing his limitations, knowing the evils of superficiality and the terrors of fatigue, will have to cling to what is close to him, to what he knows, to what he can do, to his friends and his tradition and his love, lest he be dissolved in a universal confusion and know nothing and love nothing.*

J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER

*Prospects in the Arts  
and Sciences*



THIS is a work of scholarship, undertaken not for its own sake, but for the ends of illuminating character and social and literary history. In large part it is based on three sources of new information: recollections, unpublished letters, and accounts long buried in newspaper files.

Much of the research was among living persons whose help is acknowledged in text and in notes. Three of Captain Slocum's children, Benjamin Aymar Slocum, Jessie Slocum Joyce, and the late James Garfield Slocum helped in every way they could. Others of the family who co-operated generously were Grace Murray Brown, Catherine Woodruff, Lorimer B. Slocum, Emma Slocumb Miller, and Charles F. Slocumb. Mr. Lee Furman of Sheridan House, publisher of the late Victor Slocum's book about his father, gave general permission to quote from it.

The whereabouts of all Slocum letters cited is given. Three caches, however, deserve special mention: one in the Century Collection in the Manuscript Room of the New York Public Library, one in the Library of the Peabody Museum in Salem, and one in the Library of the Smithsonian Institution. In this connection thanks are due Robert Hill, Ernest Dodge, and Frank Sawyer.

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## A WORD OF THANKS

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And finally, I most warmly thank Sonya O'Sullivan. From first page to last this biography owes a very great deal to her editorial judgment and literary skill.

THE search for Captain Slocum began with a chance reading of his book, and a chance discovery, at Martha's Vineyard, that people who knew him were still alive. For Joshua Slocum had disappeared at sea some forty years before; boat, logs, letters, papers, all going down with him. And one might even say that his time of world disappeared with him, too.

Living on the edge of the twentieth century, Slocum saw his beloved tall-masted sailing ships driven from the seas by the coming of steam. The world, as he knew it, was changing. But he, personally, would not convert to steam. He did not like it. It was not beautiful to him, like sail. Alone, and how small in time and space, he took his fist at progress and change. Alone, he defied them, and in the end, perhaps won a sort of victory.

What Captain Slocum—fifty-one years old, brown-bearded and bald-headed—did, was to sail around the world in a boat which he himself built out of a derelict hulk. He went without power, radio, money, advertising sponsor, or life insurance. And he went entirely alone. He was the first to do so.

Till the crack of doom, men will remember the voyage he made. For Slocum pitted himself, his own will and skill, against the universe in the time-honored manner of

all assailers, from Columbus to Herzog. And he had the strength to live in accordance with his own beliefs, even when they ran counter to prevailing thought. These are the qualities that make a man worth searching for.

Beyond all this, and when the voyage was done, he wrote a book. It must be among the finest ever written by a man who did not set out to be a writer. Van Wyck Brooks has described it as "a nautical equivalent to Thoreau's account of his life in the hut at Walden." Slocum called it, quite simply, *Sailing Alone Around the World*.

*Sailing Alone Around the World* has been translated into Polish, German, French, and Dutch; and more than fifty years after publication is still in print in this country. However, in England, since World War II, new editions of Slocum have been selling by the tens of thousands. Perhaps it is not surprising that this nineteenth-century mariner, who would not accept a world he could neither control nor love, should become a contemporary hero.

Though Captain Slocum was that rarest of sea-birds, an articulate Yankee sailor, there was much that he did not, could not, tell. "The voyage . . ." he wrote, "was the natural outcome not only of my love of adventure, but of my lifelong experience." But what was the lifelong experience? What were the forces that shaped him? What made him do what he did? What made him able to do it? And how did the doing of it affect him? To try to find answers to these and similar questions, I decided to go looking for what clues might be left.

Searching, I visited the house and farm which had

been Slocum's one and only home on land. I talked with his widow, then in her ninetieth year. I held the hand that had held the captain's.

Then I saw a photograph of him. It was taken on the Massachusetts coast, six years before the end. Slocum is sitting on a home-made bench on his boat, his black felt hat just clearing the boom. He looks spare, flinty, fearless, and yet somehow afraid. It is summer, and he ought to be on the Vineyard farming, but of course, he is not. I noticed that his two shoes were not laced the same way. That was funny. Who would lace one shoe one way, and one the other?

Slocum was a man so tied to a time, and that time so gone, that we can surely say: he will never live again. His type, like the sailing ships he loved so stubbornly and well, has vanished from the earth forever. With the lapse of a few more years, the testimony of those who knew him will also be lost. One seeks him now in the drifting memories of old men and women, and in such scattered and fragmentary records as survive. Perhaps the search will, after all, throw some light on a man determined to be his own man, and, whatever the cost, to live the life he believed in.

W. M. T.





*As for myself, the wonderful sea  
charmed me from the first.*

"I WAS born in a cold spot, on coldest North Mountain, on a cold February 20th," Joshua Slocum wrote.<sup>1</sup> Chilling was the scene, and sea-haunted. It overlooked the worn coast and tremendous tides of the Bay of Fundy. Fogs rolled in from the ocean ceaselessly. The year was 1844.

In those days, the maritime province of Nova Scotia was one of the shipbuilding centers of the world. It was a place dedicated to the sea, and to the modes of life peculiar to sea-faring men. ". . . it is nothing against the master mariner if the birth-place mentioned on his certificate be Nova Scotia," was how Slocum put it.

Although Joshua's people "on both sides . . . were sailors," actually his father was a farmer, and it was on a farm that he spent his early years—even though within sight and sound of the Bay.

History had put him in this spot. An early John Slocombe,\* in Massachusetts, had been a Quaker, opposed

\* "Slocomb, or Slocum. The name, like so many English surnames, is of local origin, and due to the abundant growth of the sloe tree, or wild plum, in some valley or depression among the hills, called in Old English a *combe*. A person, say, Richard, living in such a spot would become known among outsiders as 'Richard of the *sloe combe*,' and when the use of surnames became general, his posterity would inherit the name crystal-

to war. After the War of Independence, he was exiled, along with thousands of others who could not take sides, or who had taken what turned out to be the wrong side. But because his father and uncle had captained transports from Boston to Quebec for the Loyalists, John Slocombe's exile was softened by a grant of land in Nova Scotia: five hundred acres on a trap ridge in Wilmot Township, Annapolis County. There, John's progeny lived, and there Joshua was born.<sup>2</sup>

Joshua, as a small boy, while working on "the old clay farm which some calamity" had made his father's, could hear in the distance before him the roaring of the tides. At his back was the Annapolis River valley. He could look down and see the tall spruce trees good for building ships. In the time between farm chores and meager country schooling, he built a raft out of spruce fence rails, put a sail on it, and sallied forth across the mill pond.<sup>3</sup> Whenever he could, he joined the neighbors fishing for cod and mackerel in the bay. From the start, he was obsessed with ships.

It was a hard life, but it had flavor. The hearth of one's childhood was something to remember always. "What good things came from those old fire-places—oh! those barley cakes, and those buckwheat flapjacks—oh!"<sup>4</sup>

But the means of even this simple subsistence was not easy to come by. The family was large. "Poor father!" Joshua wrote long afterwards, "what a load he carried and

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lized into its modern form. Our Slocombs derive from SIMON, who married at Wrentham, Mass., in 1719. (He no doubt was a lineal descendant from Anthony Slocum, one of the first purchasers of Taunton, Mass., in 1637." Calnek, W. A., edited by Savary, A. W., *History of the County of Annapolis*, Toronto, 1897, p. 601.

how he grubbed a living, for us all, out of the old clay farm. And how I've seen him break down when he came back to the 'Family Alter' after the season of laying it aside, though never far out of sight, and cry Father, Father . . . ."<sup>5</sup>

When Joshua was eight, the family left the old homestead, held so long by the Slocumbes, and never returned. They moved down country to the little village of Westport on Brier Island. Brier Island is tiny, only four miles long; a piece of land flung into the Atlantic. On one side roar the waters of the Bay of Fundy whose tides rise and fall more than fifty feet; on the other, St. Mary's Bay flows majestically by. The move was made for the most serious reasons: because John, the father, was not a successful farmer, and, as a relative put it, ". . . because of Sarah's dying condition."<sup>6</sup>

Joshua's mother, Sarah Jane Sothern, was the daughter of the keeper of the Southwest Point Light at Westport. "The light her father had kept faced the Atlantic and guarded the entrance to the Bay of Fundy. What a turbulent prospect most of the time!" Sarah was ill: "too many children coming too closely."<sup>7</sup> She was tired, worn out, and she wanted to go back to the village where she had been born, where she could be near her kin. So they had gone.

Like most women of her time and station, she has left little evidence of her existence. She stares mutely out of daguerreotypes, all naturalness gone from her face, while she sits, immobilized, for the picture-taking. One searches for signs of her living, for evidence of the laughter, tears, or anger she must have experienced, but there are only the unguiving statistics. She was frail, the relatives said, "dear

Sarah, so frail and the babies demanding so much care . . . a lovely, gentle soul." She was eighteen when she married. John, Joshua's father, was twenty-one, the record states. Then silence, except for the list, the familiar list, in the front of the family Bible:

Sarah Jane, born 18 November, 1834; died 5 Sept., 1853.

Elizabeth, born 7 July, 1837.

John Ingraham, born 28 July 1839; died 10 Oct., 1844.

Georgiana, born 5 September, 1841.

Joshua, b. 20 Feb., 1844.

Margaret, born 11 August, 1846.

Ornan, b. 10 June, 1849.

Alice, born 26 May, 1851.

Henrietta, born 26 April, 1854.

Ingram Bill, born 6 November, 1856.

Ella, born 5 February, 1860.<sup>8</sup>

Joshua was the fifth child, and he could not have had much mothering. A brother died the year he was born, a sister arrived two years later. Three more years, and another baby. And after that, another, and another, and another, until finally, Ella, the eleventh child, was born. Sarah Jane died a week later. Then came the last record, so often the only news of a woman having ever existed at all; the tombstone. "To the memory of Sarah Jane, wife of John Slocombe, died Feb. 16, 1860 being 46 years old."<sup>9</sup>

Joshua, even at the age of eight, was left a good deal on his own. "I had already been afloat with other boys on the bay, with chances greatly in favor of being drowned," he wrote. This was hardly an overstatement. The Bay of

Fundy is rightly dreaded by men in small boats. Its tide goes out suddenly, silently, leaving the ocean floor naked, only to come raging back, full of fury and menace. Of course, Joshua, like all country boys and professional sailors of his time, did not swim. He never learned. Not being able to swim meant that he had no fear of the water. He understood the mystic bond between man and sea in a way that the swimmer, who really fights against it, does not know. He was fatalistic about it. He knew that the sea would claim him if it meant to, and, in a sense, he was willing to accept death in it. So from the beginning, Joshua was not afraid, but was drawn to the sea.

At Westport, John Slocombe tried to support his family by making fishermen's leather boots. Josh, at ten, was taken out of school to help. He hated the work, and though he bent to the will of his father, he was still hearing rushing waters and watching the sailing ships go by. Father and son did not get along. The little business went badly.

The break between them came over a trivial matter, as it usually does in such cases, but it was symbolic. Josh, now twelve, had been caught in the cellar, "putting the finishing touches on a ship model which had taken him many furtive moments to make. His father burst in upon him in a fury, seized the precious work of art (and hope) and dashed it to the ground, smashing yards and masts and utterly destroying the whole thing . . . The strange part of all this cruelty on the part of the elder Slocombe was that it was never greatly resented by his son Josh who rather regarded it as a just exercise of parental authority. However, he regretted the smashing of the ship model more than he did the castigation." In after years, he used

to "tell his mates about it at the cabin table. They thought it was pretty rough."<sup>10</sup>

John Slocombe was a big man, six feet tall, two hundred pounds, and muscular.<sup>11</sup> "He was not afraid of a capful of wind, and he never took a back seat at a camp meeting, or a good, old-fashioned revival," his son recalled. A deacon of his church, and much concerned with the devil, he preached a religion as bleak as the surrounding fogbanks. "I never cared much for the devil after I grew up and got away to sea . . . I myself, do not care much for your long-faced tyrannical Christian," Joshua wrote long after.<sup>12</sup>

When he was fourteen, Josh ran away, and for a short time was cook on a fishing schooner, "but I was not long in the galley," he wrote, "for the crew mutinied at the appearance of my first duff, and 'chucked me out' before I had a chance to shine as a culinary artist." When he returned, the escapade cost him a thrashing. But that was something he could take as well as give. In Westport, in those days, there was a bridge which divided the town socially, as well as geographically. Joshua, according to his oldest son, was head of the faction of underdogs, and, at an early age, was already "a pretty fair pugilist."<sup>13</sup>

But like many men, once he got away, Joshua Slocum was proud of his father, and of the tyranny he had endured. In his book he wrote, "My father was the sort of man who, if wrecked on a desert island, could find his way home if he had a jack knife and could find a tree." But whatever Josh had inherited from his father, he did not look like him. Rather, he had the "finely cut features and unusual eyes"<sup>14</sup> of the mother he never mentions. On the

basis of the meager facts, it is hard to say truthfully why he found it so difficult to speak of mother or wife. Somehow, the circumstances of his childhood made him forever after virtually unable to mention women, especially those important to him.

The increasingly irascible father was left with "nine motherless chicks" after his wife died. Josh was sixteen. Very soon he left Brier Island to go deep water for good.

On his first voyage out, he shipped with a friend as a foremast hand on a deal drogher bound for Dublin.<sup>15</sup> Whenever he was free, he studied, practicing with the sextant, and teaching himself from a copy of J. W. Norie's *Epitome of Navigation*, for he was a natural student whose lot it had been to spend almost no time at school. As a consequence, he never learned how to spell or punctuate. He had wasted no effort in trying out subjects not truly his. From the beginning, his interest ran narrow and deep. It was the sea that mattered; the sea, and again the sea.

From Dublin, Josh sailed to Liverpool; and from Liverpool to China, via the Cape of Good Hope. He made the latter passage on the British ship *Tanjore*, and remembered it, later, without love. "I may have been a little severe on Captain M of the old 'Tanjore' but it is my only revenge for years of broken health brought on by the Captain 'who talked through his nose' having us, his sailors, working the ice cargo in the cool of the mornings and evenings and then aloft or, worse still, over the ship's side in the heat of the days, which in Hong Kong in the summer, as it was, was intensely hot several of the crew died. I could not stand it, but when I left the ship I sued—and recovered three months extra wages. The crime for



which the crew was so inhumanly worked, was that each had the high wages of our home port—\$50 per month.”<sup>10</sup>

In *Sailing Alone*, he remembers Captain Martin as a first-rate navigator, but an officer so imperious and brass-bound that he could not hand ordinary seaman Slocum a letter but “gave it to the first mate; the first mate gave it to the second mate, and he laid it, michingly, on the capstan head, where I could get it!”

From Hong Kong, the *Tanjore* sailed to Batavia where young Josh was left in a hospital ashore, down with fever.

It was not a soft life he had chosen. But he probably had not had a second's doubt about how he wanted to spend his life. He had made his choice, and made it early, and made it with conviction.

*Toward the Goal of Happiness*

AT THE age of eighteen, on a voyage from Liverpool to the East Indies, Slocum was promoted to second mate. He soon became chief mate. In this capacity, he twice sailed around the Horn on British ships, trading coal out, grain home between Liverpool, Cardiff, and San Francisco.<sup>1</sup>

. In 1864, when in the middle of the Atlantic, on the bark *Agra*, Captain Shaw, he had a very close call. He was on the upper topsail yard, gathering in sail, when a gust struck and pitched him off. "His fall was broken and his life saved by collision with the main yard, which he struck on his head, cutting a gash over his left eye."<sup>2</sup> The scar remained for the rest of his life.

When he reached San Francisco again, he decided to make it his hailing port. He became an American citizen. For a while, he stayed ashore in California, acquired a partner, and built a gill net fishing boat for salmon. It was his first try at an occupation which had fascinated him from the beginning. "Next in attractiveness, after seafaring, came shipbuilding," Slocum wrote. "I longed to be master in both professions . . ." He took the boat out for one season on the Columbia River, but hearing that there was more money in hunting sea otters near Vancouver Island, he went off in that direction.

The lure of these inshore adventures, however, did not last long. Slocum's real ambition was command of a ship. This he achieved in 1869, when, at the early age of twenty-five, he became captain of a coasting schooner plying between San Francisco and Seattle. Coasters were tough in those days, but what he wanted he usually got, if will and determination could bring it about.

His next command, the bark *Washington*, 332 tons, was a step upward. In December 1870, she sailed from San Francisco for Sydney, Australia, with a general cargo. From Sydney, she was to sail to Cook Inlet, Alaska, to fish for salmon.<sup>3</sup>

But something of moment happened in Sydney; Slocum got married. It is typical of him never to have mentioned where or how he met his wife. Once again, the words are lost; only the facts remain. They were married.

"I, James Greenwood, being Minister of the Bathurst St. Baptist Church, Sydney, do hereby Certify, that I have this day, at 56 Upper Fort Street, Sydney, duly celebrated Marriage between Joshua Slocum, Bachelor, Master Mariner of Massachusetts,\* United States and Virginia Albertina Walker, Spinster, of 19 Buckingham Street, Strawberry Hill, Sydney, after Declaration duly made as by law required. Dated this 31st day of January, 1871 . . .

"The Consent of Mr. Wm. Henry Walker, 19 Buckingham Street, Strawberry Hill, Sydney, was given to the Marriage of Virginia Albertina Walker with Joshua Slocum, the said Virginia Albertina Walker being under the age of Twenty-one years."<sup>4</sup>

\* Though sailing out of San Francisco, Slocum was, by ancestry and affinity, a Massachusetts man. He had no home. His mailing address was with one or another of his sisters.

Virginia's father, William Walker, was a Forty-niner who had wandered from New York, to California, to the gold mines of Australia, and had finally gone into business in Sydney. Her sister "became a contralto and sang in opera," and she had a younger brother named George.

As so often happened in the romances of sea captains of that day, the young lady, who generally knew her husband perhaps one, two, or three weeks, picked herself up, packed her belongings, kissed Mama and Papa good-bye, stepped aboard her new husband's ship, and sailed away forever. That is what Virginia did. She was, however, spectacularly well-suited to the strenuous life she had chosen.

. Born in Staten Island, New York, she is said to have been, on her mother's side, descended from the Leni-Lenape tribe of that region, and proud of her Indian blood.<sup>5</sup> She loved the outdoors. As a girl, in Australia, she "was trained to ride horses and on weekends, she rode with associates into the Blue Mountains, exploring and sleeping on the ground much as the natives did. She told of cooking eggs in a piece of cloth and held in a boiling hot spring. I remember seeing her riding equipment which she always had with her aboard ship, also the whip," her son wrote.<sup>6</sup>

If the bark *Washington* resembled other ships of its class and date, the quarters Virginia now moved into were constraining, to put it mildly. The living accommodations for the captain generally consisted of a cabin adequate though seldom commendable, which contained a large desk, barometer, chronometers, a sextant, and, in the case of Slocum, probably many books. Sometimes there was a piano. The only light came from a transom through which

Virginia might have an excellent view of the legs of the man at the wheel, and perhaps a little sky beyond, criss-crossed by the ship's rigging. Such cabins were usually damp and airless.

The sleeping quarters were a stateroom aft, largely taken up by a bed so swung as to counteract the rocking of the vessel. There was room for a trunk and washstand and a wife, if she chose to accompany her husband, but most masters sailed alone. This cabin and stateroom was partitioned off from the saloon, amidships, which opened onto the cubby-holes occupied by the mates, and the galley. Into this tiny space would crowd the captain, the exceptional wife, and the mates, for meal after meal, day after day, month after month, on the long voyages. In general, ships of this sort were no place for women, and crews resented the presence of the captain's wife aboard, even though in some cases, by their good sportsmanship and usefulness—(some mended and cared for the sick, and sometimes, like Virginia, became very adequate navigators)—they won the respect and affection of the men. It was, at any rate, not an easy role. Virginia would have been known as "Mrs. Captain Slocum."

It was a rarely courageous wife who accompanied her husband on more than one voyage. But Virginia, for the rest of her life, sailed wherever Captain Joshua went.

The honeymoon trip across the vast Pacific, from Sydney in the southwest to Cook Inlet, Alaska, in the northeast, in search of salmon, might have been enough to dissuade a less hardy girl. As Slocum's oldest son later put it, "The fishing was carried out successfully except for the loss of the vessel." It was only four years since Russia had

sold Alaska, and the waters were not well known to American masters. The charts were still very sketchy. The *Washington* dragged her anchors in a gale and was stranded on the shoals, some 200 miles from Kodiak. This caused "an awkward problem" in the transportation of the salmon. A boat larger than the ship's boats was needed.

Thereupon, the captain and his three mates fell to and built a 35-foot whaleboat, but just as she was finished, a revenue cutter appeared. Virginia was taken to Kodiak and thus spared the open-boat voyage across the icy waters.

Slocum, however, stayed by his doomed vessel while the catch was prepared for shipping. He then used the whaleboat to transport the fish to a couple of sealers with empty holds. The sealers took the salmon to San Francisco, while the captain, his wife, and crew, got passage home on a Russian bark.

The owners of the *Washington*, though they had lost their ship, were apparently satisfied with their master. They gave him another command, the barkentine *Constitution*, a small packet running between San Francisco and Honolulu. This must have been considered ideal by Captain Slocum's young wife. Honolulu, at that time, was a rendezvous for all ships wandering the Pacific, the maritime equivalent of the general store and post-office. It was a social oasis for the painfully isolated and usually very lonely captains' wives. Here one could bring out of the damp trunk the good Sunday dress, press out its two month or six month old wrinkles, and stroll about the streets, or drink tea with friends on the lawn of the hotel. Here a lady could shop for dress goods, discuss patterns,

and enjoy that rarest of luxuries on shipboard—female companionship.

Virginia gave birth to her first child on board the *Constitution* lying at anchor in San Francisco harbor. It was a year, almost to the day, since she had married. The baby was a boy, and the proud young parents called him Victor.<sup>8</sup>

The following year, 1873, Slocum was put in command of the *B. Aymar*, a full rigged, single topsail, East Indies trader, sailing from Sydney to Amoy. The ship was named after the commercial house that owned her, Ben Aymar & Co.<sup>9</sup> A second son, born on board, at the end of that year, was, in turn, named after the ship. Benjamin Aymar, he was christened, and then known throughout his life, as B. Aymar, just as the ship was known. A third child, Jessie, named for Virginia's sister back home, was also born on board in June 1875 while the ship lay in Philippine waters. Soon thereafter, the *B. Aymar* was sold in Manila by her owners.

In Manila, Slocum took time out to ply his second trade, that of shipbuilder. He met a British marine architect, Edward Jackson, and contracted to build a steamship hull for him. For this purpose, Slocum set up a primitive boatyard at Olongapo, a jungle village at the head of Subic Bay, sixty miles from Manila. The site had advantages. There was plentiful and excellent timber on the nearby mountainside, and there was a natural launching beach. But there were some disadvantages, too: the heavy damp air of a monsoon tropical climate, the reptile-infested beach, poisonous plants, and unfriendly local contractors who resented the successful foreign bidder.

To start with, Slocum, who always kept his family with him, had a nipa-thatched house built for his wife and children. The sills were seven feet off the ground, high enough for safety and health, and also to provide accommodations for chickens and pigs below. Even so, "centipedes and scorpions had a habit of crawling into our clothes and getting into our shoes . . . it was routine to shake and search everything while dressing . . .," Victor recalled.<sup>10</sup> Virginia's early camping experiences stood by her now as she made the best of jungle life for herself and her three young children.

Shipbuilding is slow work. The Slocums lived at Olongapo a year.<sup>11</sup> Trees to build with had to be felled and hewn into square logs with axes. Water buffalo then dragged them down to the shore to be ripped into scantling and plank by Tagalog sawyers with hand saws. But in spite of difficulties, which included plots to attack the family and wreck the ship, the 80-ton hull<sup>12</sup> was built, launched, and towed to Manila, to be fitted to the engine. As part of his payment, Slocum was given the 90-ton schooner, *Pato*, designed and built by the same Mr. Jackson and lying nearby in the Pasig River.

At first, Slocum had no plans for the schooner, but his family "agreed that it was better to live afloat in however small a craft,"<sup>13</sup> than on the beach at Olongapo. So they picked up some inter-island trips, and then a charter to salvage the cargo of a British bark which was hanging on a reef in the China Sea. After bringing the cargo back to Manila, Slocum took another cargo out to Hong Kong—his family aboard, as usual.

In Hong Kong, in 1877, the sight of some old splitting



knives in one of the lockers of the *Pato* changed Slocum's plans. He decided to go fishing again. Picking up a rough crew of seal and sea otter hunters, he fitted out as an Okhotsk Sea fisherman. From Hong Kong, Slocum sailed for Petropovlovsk, 2,000 ocean miles away. After two weeks on the Okhotsk Grounds, he had 25,000 cod salted down and was heading for a west-coast market 3,000 miles further on. As the price offered in Victoria, B. C., did not suit, he sailed to Portland where he turned traveling salesman and peddled his Cape Cod turkey. He soon sold the whole cargo at a "handsome profit."<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, in her life on board ship, Virginia sewed, played the piano, and reared her children. She also displayed some unusual, and curiously fortunate, abilities: "To spend a few hours with sharks, in mid ocean, when they were present, Mother and I teamed up," B. Aymar recollected. "It was my job to get the shark interested in coming close up. I used a new tin can with a string on it to attract the shark close under the stern where Mother dispatched it with her .32 cal. revolver with which she never needed but one shot. How I loved to see her do it—and without any signs on her part of showing superior skill."<sup>15</sup> Quite untypical memories for a boy to have of his mother, and quite untypical even for captains' wives, most of whom sat under their parasols, or improvised awnings, embroidering, reading the magazines a little, or fussing with their children. Virginia and her son, B. Aymar, were the only members of the family who could swim. B. Aymar adds that "she was an excellent cook of the rough and ready sort."

It is hard to imagine a more perfect wife for Joshua

Slocum. Many years later, after she had died, B. Aymar remembered his father looking at a photograph. "Tears streamed over his face. Finally he said, 'Your mother had the eyes of an eagle and she even saw things I could never see.' Mother's eyes were a brilliant golden color—I have seen such eyes on our Golden Eagles—she knew how to use them, too, but very calmly."<sup>16</sup>

Somewhere, during all this voyaging, Virginia had given birth to twins. The only mention of them, however, is when they died—off the coast of Siberia—thousands of miles of ocean away from anything Virginia had known. "The ocean is no place to raise a family," is the son's quiet comment. Virginia, despite the hard toll it took of her, might have disagreed.

From Portland, in 1878, they set out once more for Honolulu, a 2,400 mile run. There, Slocum sold the *Pato*. It was specified that payment be made in gold. Upon receiving it, the captain put it in a bag, carried it to his wife and "tossed it into her lap with — 'Virginia, there's the schooner.'" <sup>17</sup> The return to the States was made by steamer.

Back in San Francisco now, Slocum bought the packet *Amethyst*, a full-rigged vessel of 350 tons register. This was not then considered a small ship, and she was Slocum's largest to date. She had been built in Massachusetts by the renowned shipbuilder Thatcher Magoun, and launched in 1822; and was, at this time, one of the oldest American ships afloat.\* The captain fitted her out for the Philip-pines-to-China timber trade.<sup>18</sup>

\* In Chinese waters, the *Amethyst* was known as "Old 1822" because of the Roman numerals rather than her name on her burgee. In her,

On the first voyage with the *Amethyst*, Slocum carried cargo and passengers to Manila. In addition to his family, he took along his brother Ingram, as cook, and his sister Ella, to help his wife. It was proving a very strenuous life for Virginia. "I believe that she had a weak heart," B. Aymer wrote. "She often fainted when trouble disturbed her."

In Manila, in July, Slocum made arrangements for carrying timber from the hardwood forests in the Province of Tayabas, in lower Luzon. And Virginia wrote her mother this letter:

LAGUEMANAC. PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

July 17/1879

*Dearest Mother & all*

You must excuse for writing you so short a letter. I have been verely sick ever since the 15 of last month I feel a little better now it is such a strange sicken (?). I have not been able to eat anything till lately. Dear Josh has got me every thing he can think of my hand shakes so now I can hardley write. Dear Mother my Dear little baby died the other day & I expect that is partley the cause. every time her teeth would start to come she would cry all night if I would cut them through the gum would grow togather again. the night she died she had one convulsion after another I gave her a hot bath and some medecine & was quite quiet infact I thought she was going to come around when she gave a quiet sigh and was gone. Dear Josh embalmed her in brandy for we would not leave her

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according to the *New York Daily Tribune*, 26 June 1882, p. 8, "Captain Slocum feared he would end his seafaring career in a typhoon in the China sea . . ."

in this horid place she did look so pretty after she  
died Dearest Mother I cannot write any more  
/s/ Virginia

On the next page Virginia wrote in the corner, "Victor's letter." The little boy had written:

July 17/1879

Dear Granmama

We are going to Japan. I am tired of this place. I hope you are well and Granapapa Aunt Jessie and Uncle George. good bye from Victor<sup>19</sup>

B. Ayma, recollected that while the *Amethyst* rode at anchor in Tayabas Bay, two natives paddled out with eggs, jungle fowl, fruit, and a boa constrictor, with its tail tied to an outrigger. The captain wanted to take the lot. He was assured that the snake, tied by his dangerous end, was safe. But Virginia was not convinced, and she got Josh to give up the notion of buying the specimen. "Anything to make a dollar, danger or no," wrote B. Aymar. "Father was a trader in any line."

The timber trade, after a year or two, fell off. Freight charters were undertaken—coal from Nagasaki to Shanghai, and from Nagasaki to Vladivostock; natural ice from Hakodate to Hong Kong, and gunpowder from Shanghai to Tainan. The final return to Hong Kong was made late in 1880. The harbor, as Slocum sailed in, was crowded with ships from all over the world. There were, of course, no tugs. "Father ordered 'all hands stand by all stations,' including the anchor which the first mate had to attend to," B. Aymar recalled.

"Try to picture the *Amethyst* under full sail heading

for a narrow passageway between three British warships on the starboard side and a full rigged merchant ship on the port side.

"When these anchored vessels saw the *Amethyst* bearing down on that narrow waterway between them, their crews expected to see a very severe smashup of at least three vessels.

"Father took the wheel—mother stood by him. Her silence gave him confidence. He wished to reach an anchorage in the middle of the entire fleet before him.

"The admiral of one of Her Majesty's Ships stood at his station looking for a crash of spars and torn sails. Father just cleared the H. M. S. by inches—then skilfully cleared the merchant ship by a few inches—passed on to the vacancy and with 'down helm' swung into the wind, and the 'let go the anchor' order was given. It was then that father remembered his breach of marine etiquette for he did not salute the H. M. S. in passing . . .

"Father wrote an apology to the admiral whose reply read like this—'Any man who can sail a ship under full sail through a passageway too dangerous to contemplate need not apologize to the entire British Navy. You are hereby invited to join me aboard the H. M. S. (date given) and the lady who stood beside you on that occasion.' Signed by the admiral.

"That may give you a picture of the strength my mother had and of her judgment valued by Father—one peep from her would have changed the whole picture."<sup>20</sup>

The stakes might be high, but Virginia made bold decisions.



## *The Magnificent Ship*

ON 3 MARCH 1881, in Hong Kong harbor, on board the *Amethyst*, Virginia gave birth to a son. In America, it was almost Inauguration Day. The still proud and patriotic parents, far from home, named the child James A. Garfield. A few days later, Slocum sold the *Amethyst* to move his family into larger quarters.

The *Northern Light*, a three-masted windjammer of 1,800 tons register, 220 feet long, three decks, and five times the size of the ancient *Amethyst*, happened also to be in Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> Her commander, Captain John E. Kenney, who had brought her out from New York, was also part-owner. There, in the South China entrepôt, Slocum acquired Kenney's interest, and succeeded him as master of "the magnificent ship."

The business was transacted in the office of the U. S. Consul, the then very famous Colonel Mosby,\* former Confederate scout and ranger. He was, of course, the kind

\* John Singleton Mosby (1833-1916), lawyer and guerilla fighter, who surrendered eight companies of equipped and mounted irregulars two weeks after Lee's surrender, had been scarred by saber wounds. At one time, northern Virginia was known as Mosby's Confederacy. An admirer, and later, a friend of Grant, Mosby turned Republican; was appointed to the post in Hong Kong, where he served from 1878 to 1885. He wrote two books on his Civil War experiences.

of man who appealed to Slocum, and whom the captain was constantly running into; only Virginia, as she told the children, "could not look at the Colonel's cut up features."<sup>2</sup> But she could look at her own baby embalmed in brandy!

Command of the *Northern Light* marked the zenith of Slocum's first career. "I had a right to be proud of her, for at that time . . . she was the finest American sailing vessel afloat." Though the captain's *Northern Light* "was as beautiful as her name,"<sup>3</sup> she should not be confused with the fast clipper ship which, in an earlier generation, had also been called *Northern Light*. The true clipper days were already gone.\*

After taking command in Hong Kong, Slocum sailed to Manila, where he took on a cargo of sugar which he then carried westward, around the Cape of Good Hope, to Liverpool. It was early summer of 1882 when, with his wife and four children on board, he sailed into New York harbor, the *Northern Light's* home port. He had brought his ship half way around the world. And a profitable voyage it had been for master and owners.

The stamp of success was on Slocum. All he had set out to do, he had done. An authoritarian by temperament, as well as by family precept and example, he had gained, at last, his heart's desire. He really was in command. He was making money, and surely had reason to believe he would make still more. He was in love with, and was loved by, his wife; he found in her a perfect companion. He

\* The clipper *Northern Light*, designed by Samuel Pook, was built at South Boston by Briggs Brothers in 1851. Slocum's ship was built by George Thomas at Quincy, Massachusetts, and launched in 1872.

had four thriving children. And he had accomplished all with nothing but his hands and head. Only one thing remained: to have his father see that he had indeed become a man. For perhaps no man finally becomes a man until he proves it in his father's eyes.

Father and son had not met since the day when young Josh had left Nova Scotia. Twenty-two years had passed since then. Now, like Joseph in Egypt, sending for Jacob, Slocum, in New York, asked that his aging parent come see his son in his glory. He sent the old man the money for the trip, for John Slocumb still was a fiscal failure. The old farmer, remarried and now retired—he was past seventy—obeyed the summons, and took along a daughter of his second family. He had, of course, never seen his daughter-in-law, Virginia, nor the four grandchildren.

"Father came down to see me in my fine ship *Northern Light*," Josh wrote years later,<sup>4</sup> "but we didn't spend our time talking about fine large ships, our business was a quarter of a century back—just—'Joshua' said he 'do you remember the night in the little boat when we rowed all night on a lee-shore and the fishing vessels came into port with close reefed sail?"

"Didn't I remember it!"

Quite possibly, father and son never saw each other again. John Slocumb died 9 September 1887, while the captain was away on another voyage.

The *Northern Light* lay at pier 23, East River, a short way above Brooklyn Bridge, which was not yet open to traffic. Her rig was so lofty that part of it had had to be struck to let her pass under the span. Of course, the bridge was being built for the future. Steam was tightening its



grip on shipping, and Slocum and the *Northern Light* were becoming outmoded. Those were the final hours when masts and rigging in geometric patterns towered over the city. There were, as yet, no tall buildings to dwarf them.

A reporter for the *New York Tribune* went aboard. Writing of "An American Home Afloat,"<sup>8</sup> he described this "typical American ship, commanded by a typical American sailor who has a typical American wife to accompany him on his long voyages, and to make his cabin as acceptable a home as he could have on shore. No one, to look at the graceful lines of this vessel, her Yankee rigging and sails, her bold cutwater and her noble stern, could mistake her for any other than an American ship. . . . A visit to her deck suggests two sad and striking thoughts, one that American sailing ships are becoming obsolete and the other that so few American sailors can be found. . . . The tautness, trimness, and cleanliness of this vessel, from keelson to truck and from stem to stern, are features not common on merchant ships. The neat canvas cover over the steering-wheel bearing the vessel's name and hailing port, worked with silk, is the handiwork of the captain's wife. Descending to the main cabin, one wonders whether or not he is in some comfortable apartment ashore. . . .

"Mrs. Slocum sat busily engaged with her little girl at needlework. Her baby boy was fast asleep in his Chinese cradle. An older son was putting his room in order and a second son was sketching. The captain's stateroom is a commodious apartment, furnished with a double berth which

one might mistake for a black walnut bedstead; a transom upholstered like a lounge, a library, chairs, carpets, wardrobe and the chronometers. This room is abaft the main cabin which is furnished like a parlor. In this latter apartment are the square piano, center table, sofa, easy chairs and carpets, while on the walls hang several oil paintings.

"In front of the parlor is the dining room, which together with the other rooms, exhibit a neatness of which only a woman's hand is capable. . . .

"The captain's baby is the captain's pride and bears an honored name . . . About the first distinguishable utterance of the child was 'Gar.' General Garfield acknowledged the compliment in an autograph letter to the child. The letter was read by the father to it and the child said, 'Gar. . . .'"

Another eye-witness to the captain's splendor was his half-sister Emma, who had accompanied their father to New York, and then stayed on board with the Slocums for some time. "The cabin of the *Northern Light* was fine," she recollected. "Everything was there as in a modern apartment. There was a pantry boy, a Philippine, who took care of the pantry work. Very hot days, instead of our going out to eat, the boy was sent to the restaurant on Fulton Street. He would bring back a good supply of food. . . .

"Virginia was most kind to me during the weeks I was with them. She took me sight-seeing to the historical and art museums, also bought some nice things for me. They took me to Coney Island to hear Sousa's band of one hundred pieces. I saw nothing but happiness between

Josh and Virginia. I think there was nothing else. They seemed perfectly happy. Captain Josh was a kind, thoughtful and fine man.”<sup>6</sup>

On the *Northern Light*, Virginia taught school for Victor, B. Aymer, and Jessie. On Sundays, there were Sunday School lessons. Years later, Jessie\* recalled how her mother did fancy work, played the piano, harp, and guitar, and sang. She was a fine dancer, too. “Mother was a remarkable woman. Not many had the stamina she had. There are none today would live as she had to. She lived truly as the Book of Ruth says.”<sup>7</sup>

Father’s scrapbook also played a part in the children’s education. Jessie wrote that whenever the captain “saw any item that interested him or amused him he would get out his penknife and that bit of news would be pasted in. He used to do a lot of chuckling over some of them. Father and mother always encouraged us in reading any and all books.” One of the cabins of the *Northern Light* is said to have had a library of 500 volumes, and “with its orderly and well fitted bookcases looked very much like the study of a literary worker or a college professor.”<sup>8</sup>

In spite of finely appointed cabins, life on the *Northern Light* was not easy. The responsibility was immense. Danger was ever present. The *Tribune* reporter had noted how few American seamen could then be found. He was right. Enterprising young men were going West. Malcontents and drifters made up the bulk of the crews in which quality tended to be as poor as composition was diverse. On American ships, one found not only roving adventurers,

\* For more than fifty years now, Mrs. Jessie Slocum Joyce. But she still signs her letters, “The Captain’s Daughter.”

and men seeking to escape the restraints of civilization, but drunkards, vagrants, criminals, and degenerates. By and large, foremast hands were by now recruited from the dregs of society. Set against them were officers who were often brutal and tyrannical. The inexperienced, lazy, sick and depraved had to be driven to work. Under the circumstances, it took a master of uncommon ability and initiative to handle a ship. He had to counterbalance the inferiority of a large percentage of his shipmates. He needed plenty of courage. Besides navigation and seamanship, he needed to know how to use his fists. And Slocum knew. Some ten years later, a newspaperman described him as being "as tough as wrought iron and as lively on his feet as a chicken. His fist is not only big, but has a hard, horny Jim Corbett cast that inspires respect. He is a good shot with the pistol. . . ."

The *Northern Light* set sail in August with a cargo of oil bound for Yokohama, but soon after leaving New York the rudder was found to be out of order, and the ship put into New London, Connecticut, for repairs. The incident provided an excuse for the crew, who had been in an ugly mood when shipped, to refuse further duty. This was mutiny. In attempting to seize the ringleader, the chief officer was stabbed and mortally wounded. Virginia sprang to the captain's side. "I saw her covering father with a revolver in each hand during the searching of the crew," B. Aymar wrote.<sup>10</sup> The Coast Guard steamed out in response to the signal for help. The wounded man was taken ashore; the mutineer, arrested. The rest of the insurgents were locked up on board the ship.

By the time the *Northern Light* was ready to sail

again, Captain Slocum had secured a new mate. But he kept the old crew. It was an unfortunate decision. For the *Northern Light* was to sail around the world, and the captain was to have trouble all the way. On the voyage out to Yokohama, he rescued a party of five native Gilbert Island missionaries, 600 miles from their home. They had been adrift in an open boat forty days.\* "Often and often," he wrote later, "in the hour of great distress and bitter sufferings, the story of the Islanders has come to my thoughts, and I have said: 'My state is not yet so bad as theirs, nor my condition so woeful as that of the stricken sailors on the pest-ridden bark, upon the inhospitable coast . . .'"<sup>11</sup>

After discharging her cargo, and the Gilbert Islanders, in Japan, the *Northern Light* sailed for Manila, where she was loaded with sugar and hemp. From that port on the South China Sea, the ship, bound for Liverpool, sailed through the Sunda Strait, passing by the volcanic island Krakatoa, in the Netherlands East Indies, just a few days before it blew up. The eruption began in May, but the "paroxysmal explosions" did not occur until 26-28 August 1883. No man-made explosion has as yet rivaled it. Stones, dust and ashes shot up from the volcano to a height of 17 miles or more, then fell on surrounding islands so thick as to bury their forests. The sounds were heard for thousands of miles. Waves fifty feet high were churned up. Nearby coastal and island villages were swamped,

\* Slocum's own account of the incident, "Rescue of Some Gilbert Islanders," is his earliest known adventure in literature. Probably written in the middle 1880's, it was published by himself as an appendix to the 1890 edition of his *Voyage of the Liberdade*.

36,000 lives lost, and atmospheric conditions disturbed throughout the world.<sup>12</sup>

The *Northern Light* must have sailed by during the time the volcano was active, but before the final upheaval. B. Aymar wrote: "Had we been three days later in that region we would have been suffocated by the fumes—something to think of anyhow." As it was, the ship sailed for many days through fields of floating pumice stone, and her decks were covered with ashes.

Trouble continued on the passage from Manila. As the *Northern Light* neared the Cape of Good Hope, heavy seas twisted her rudderhead off. She also began to leak in the topsides. Water got below and melted the sugar in the lower hold, till the ship became so crank that the hemp stowed in the between decks had to be jettisoned to keep her reasonably upright. Under jury steering gear, she finally made Port Elizabeth. There the cargo was discharged and the ship overhauled. She was laid up two months in the South African port.

Once again, an officer had to leave, this time on account of illness. A man named Henry A. Slater, an ex-convict as it turned out, was shipped in his place. It has been said that Slater, before signing on, "had arranged with some of the crew to murder Captain Slocum and take possession of the ship."<sup>13</sup> Soon after getting to sea, homeward bound, further trouble occurred. Slater was put in irons, imprisoned, and so kept for 53 days, the balance of the passage to New York. The turbulent round-the-world voyage of the *Northern Light* had taken a year and a half, but the last of it had not yet been heard by the captain.

In New York, the battle begun at sea between Slocum and Slater continued in federal court. On Slater's testimony, the captain was convicted on charges of false and cruel imprisonment. With regard to food, American merchant service articles read, "full and plenty." Slocum was fined \$500, which his underwriters paid. Slater also entered a civil suit for damages, but ended it suddenly, before it could be brought into court. The *Boston Herald* carried the report:<sup>14</sup>

"NEW YORK, Jan. 12, 1884. Henry Arthur Slater called on Mr. B. S. Osborn, editor of the Nautical Gazette, today, and said he had suffered all he wanted to, and had had enough. He said that if Mr. Osborn would hear what he had to say, he would make a clean breast of everything. So Mr. Osborn heard Slater, whose words were taken down in shorthand and sworn to before the editor, who is also a notary public. They were in substance as follows: 'I was late second officer on board the ship Northern Light, of which Joshua Slocum was master. On a voyage from Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to New York, I was confined as a prisoner by order of the said Slocum, and I was accordingly put in irons and confined as above stated. I heard Chief Mate Mitchell tell Capt. Slocum that I had said I would kill Capt. Slocum and his wife if I ever got out of irons. I believe that was the reason I was kept so closely confined. Since I have been at liberty I have found out that Capt. Slocum ordered me to be brought up on deck every day and that I should have sufficient food and water every day. Mitchell told Capt. Slocum that if I was brought up on

deck, I would create a mutiny and murder all the afterguards. I do not blame Capt. Slocum for the treatment I received . . . I never gave my authority to enter a civil suit against Capt. Slocum and I do not wish the suit to proceed. I now see that both Capt. Slocum and myself have been made the dupes of the very men who ought to have protected us, and that the whole affair is made to get money out of Capt. Slocum, to be distributed among them . . .'

"'Slater said he came voluntarily,' said Mr. Osborn. 'He said he had put Slocum in a bad hole, and was in an equally bad hole himself. He said he did not know what he had been doing. He had signed lots of papers, but did not know what they were . . .'"

The aftermath of the voyage of the *Northern Light* hurt Slocum. It cost money, for he had to defend himself in suits with Slater, and in others arising out of the New London affair. While his time was taken up in this way, another master had to be engaged for the ship. And if these suits did not hurt his reputation, a debatable point, they were certainly calculated to do so.

As a commander, what sort of reputation did he have? The editor of the *Nautical Gazette*, who took Slater's affidavit, said that Slocum was an "A-1 man, a genuine Yankee captain of high reputation." The *Tribune* reporter described the captain as "one of the most popular commanders sailing out of this port, both on account of his general capability and his kindness to his crew."<sup>15</sup> The marine historian, Frederick C. Matthews, wrote that Slocum, "while a strict disciplinarian, requiring immediate obedience to orders," was also "of a kindly disposition and



a fair just man.”<sup>16</sup> A seaman who had served under the captain said: “Captain Slocum was considered a hard man but no one ever felt unsafe under his command.”<sup>17</sup>

Slocum’s self-appraisal was: “I’m not a martinet but I have my own ideas of how to run a ship . . . The old ship-masters treated their crews like intelligent beings, giving them plenty of leeway, but holding them with a strong hand in an emergency. That’s my style . . .”<sup>18</sup>

Not long after her return to New York, there was a change of ownership of the *Northern Light*, and Slocum disposed of his interest. The ship needed overhauling, but with steam cutting into sail, it could not be done at a profit; and eventually the proud ship wound up her days as a coal barge, “ignominiously towed by the nose from port to port.”

The voyage brought changes for Slocum, too. He had, perhaps, as master, made serious mistakes of judgment. In any case, he never thereafter regained ~~his~~ financial status. A career begun so well had reached its high point. The long down-grade now began.

*A Little Bark*

CHANGING SHIPS is like changing loves. The old love exits; the new love arrives.

Slocum now bought outright from Thos. Whittridge in Baltimore a ship, in his own words, "a little bark which of all man's handiwork seemed . . . the nearest to perfection of beauty, and which in speed, when the wind blew, asked no favors of steamers." A time when masters, as well as owners, were turning to steam, was hardly the moment to invest one's dwindling means in a sailing ship. But Slocum was determined to keep on as he had begun. Like Thoreau, he heard a different drummer, and stepped to the music he heard.

The *Aquidneck*, as the fast sailing bark was called, was hardly a fifth the size of the *Northern Light*, but, in tonnage, more like the old *Amethyst*. She had been built in Mystic, Connecticut, in 1865;<sup>1</sup> and as she was now in need of repairs, she went into drydock. Meanwhile, Virginia and the children went to live with one and another of Josh's married sisters who had settled in the neighborhood of Boston. Like the captain himself, most of the brothers and sisters, reversing their forebears' migration, had gone from Nova Scotia to Massachusetts.

Virginia welcomed the change to a life ashore, for the

tumultuous voyage of the *Northern Light*, with its constant alarms, had undermined her health. "Her heart was not strong," her daughter wrote.<sup>2</sup> Temporary lodging with her sisters-in-law seems to have been congenial. One of them, describing her as "a handsome woman," said that Virginia and the captain "were deeply in love and could be completely oblivious of everyone and everything if they could be together."

By spring of 1884, the *Aquidneck* was ready to make her first voyage for her new commander and owner. "Victor and I," wrote B. Aymar, "were at Aunt Alice's home when we were ordered to come to Baltimore at once."<sup>3</sup> The ship was loaded with flour for Pernambuco, Brazil, and Slocum, with his family aboard, set sail once more.

Garfield, born too late to remember the *Northern Light*, remembered well the later home. "The saloon on board the *Aquidneck* was a beautiful room," he wrote, "parquetry floor, doors, paneling, and ceiling painted flat white, open scrollwork over the stateroom doors painted light blue and gold. The captain's room had a full size bed, porthole, etc., and the other rooms a single bunk, a bracket lamp (oil) held by a metal bracket, two metal rings to allow the lamp to remain upright when the ship rolled or pitched. There was a long table and in rough weather racks were put on the table. The table was built around the mizzenmast. Swivel chairs were bolted to the deck around the table. There were also some loose chairs, a skylight with colored glass, a canary that sang all day—a beautiful singer. Also a square grand piano was bolted to the deck. A large lamp was bolted onto the mizzenmast. There were wall bracket lamps, and double doors in the

companionways, forward and aft. There was a cabinet with glass doors for carbines, guns and revolvers and ammunition. The pantry was off the saloon. Plates and saucers were kept in boxes on a shelf built the right size, with slots: cups, mugs, soup tureens hung on hooks. There was a store room for groceries, canned goods, etc. for all hands. The deck house was amidships: a fully equipped carpenter shop, galley, staterooms for the bosun, cook and carpenter. On the roof were pens for sheep, pigs and fowl . . .

"Father had a large library on board the *Aquidneck*. He also bought a lot of books and toys for me. He was very kind and stern . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Victor described the bark as being "as close to a yacht as a merchantman could be."<sup>5</sup>

It was a pleasant voyage to Pernambuco. While the *Aquidneck* lay moored by the breakwater, Virginia and the children had good times ashore. There was a cocoanut grove where they liked to picnic on Sundays.

From Pernambuco, the Slocums sailed for Buenos Aires, but soon after passing Santa Catarina Island, 500 miles below Rio, Virginia was taken ill. She stopped making candy, doing embroidery, making stockings, and tapestry. "I remember the piece she worked on last," Garfield wrote. "She left her needle where she stopped."<sup>6</sup> Virginia went to bed and did not see land again. She was in bed when the ship reached the Plata River and anchored in the outer roads.<sup>7</sup> At Buenos Aires, the estuary of the Plata is 34 miles wide, but so shallow that in those days, before channels were dredged, ships drawing more than 15 feet were forced to anchor 12 miles outside the city.

In this situation, the captain went ashore in a public sailboat to interview prospective shippers of freight. He was trying to get a cargo for Sydney, as Virginia wished, so that she could see her people again. Before he left, he and Virginia agreed on a signal for his return in case he should be needed. The signal was the blue and white flag letter "J"—J, for Joshua.

Early on the morning of 25 July, Virginia was up again, busy salting butter for the voyage which she hoped would take her home. B. Aymar helped her. He was twelve. As is often the case in a family of several boys, there was one who liked to help his mother. But soon after this, Virginia called him to hoist the letter "J" at once.

"Father returned about noon," B. Aymar wrote, "and I was called by father at about 8 p. m. to kneel at her bedside as she breathed her last—her eyes closed and motionless."<sup>8</sup> Virginia, not yet 35, was dead.\* She was buried in the English cemetery at Buenos Aires.

Captain Slocum had lost, then, the only two women who had any meaning for him—his mother when he was sixteen, his wife when he was forty. In losing Virginia, he lost the woman in whom he had finally found the warmth and companionship a man must find or remain forever hungry.

Joshua and Virginia had been married thirteen years. Now, left as his father had been left, with young children

\* The cause of Virginia's death is not clear. George Walker, Virginia's brother, later told B. Aymar that death had come as a result of childbirth, or miscarriage, but the son did not think so. He thought it was her heart. "I never cared to ask father," he wrote. In any case, such sanitation as a sailing ship could spare for a woman in childbirth would be not unlikely to lead to infection, and to a rheumatic heart.

to raise, he took down her Bible which had been in his hands "more than once when weighted bodies went sliding along a plank or board over the main deck bulwark,"<sup>9</sup> and wrote:

Family Record

Virginia Albertina Walker

Born Aug 22 1849 New York City

Married 31st January 1871 to Joshua Slocum

Died 25th July 1884

Thy will be done not ours!

Joshua Slocum

Born Feb 20th 1844

Married Virginia A. Walker 31st Jan 1871 at Sydney  
NSW

Died\*

"Thy will be done not ours!" Slocum was on easy conversational terms 'with his Deity. "Old Sailors may have odd ways of showing their religious feelings," he wrote years later to a cousin in the clergy, "but there are no infidels at sea . . . we old sailors, even, have stowed away in our hearts, and God knows it, the longing to call on a Father and we do so."<sup>10</sup>

If Virginia had lived, Slocum might have had a happier life and posterity never have known him. B. Aymar wrote that she "knew father better than all others. She knew father could sail ships. She also knew more about father than herself. On many occasions mother had proved herself to be very psychic—and had many times reminded

\* The blank space left by the captain has not been filled in to this day. Virginia's Bible was left to B. Aymar Slocum.

father of failures that need not have occurred had he taken her advice.

"Father learned to understand her powers of intuition and he relied on it fully until she passed on. His ill fortunes gathered rapidly from the time of her death."<sup>11</sup>

Only a few days after Virginia was buried, Slocum ran the *Aquidneck* aground on a sandbar in the Plata.<sup>12</sup> After getting her off at heavy cost, he sailed for Boston with his broken family. B. Aymar was put in charge of both Jessie and Garfield. "The latter (about three) was very stubborn so Jessie helped me." After the voyage home without his mother, B. Aymar never again went back to the sea "although father wept when I begged to be left ashore at his sisters' in Massachusetts."

To Virginia's mother in Australia, Slocum wrote:

WASHINGTON D. C. 10th Feb 1885

*Dear Mother*

While I (am) here with mine and Virginia's old friends my heart goes out again for your poor aching heart. I have just been to the art galleries looking at the picture that our dear one looked at a year ago And talked with friends high in the society of this great capitol who loved her dearly but who say oh we will soon meet her in Heaven.

I feel most of the time that Virginia is with me . . . It has pained me tho to have to give up my beautiful wife when we wer getting so many enjoyable friends and getting in comfortable circumstances—I would have had some money in ha(n)d by this time if I hadnt got crazy and runn my vessel onshore. As it is now I am just swimming out of trouble on borowd

money' of cour the vessel is mine and I may be lucky enought to earn something with he(r) if I do you shall heare from me dear mother . . .

The children are just lovely and healthy. I shall strive to do well by my loved ones children I shall try mother to make her Happy in Heaven she was I know happy with me here—she knew that I loved her dearly, and always loved to be in her company—What a terrible separation this has been to me I send you a photo of o(u)r dear ones grave—the name Virginia is in gold and shall be kept in gold as long as I live . . .

Good bye Dear mother We will write you from Brazil . . .

Yours in affliction  
/s/ Josh<sup>13</sup>

Acting and thinking now without Virginia, Slocum tried to hold his course. He made three swift voyages between Baltimore and Pernambuco. On one, he carried a cargo of pianos and machinery. In those days, stevedores drove cordwood among the lading, but on this particular voyage, the rolling and pitching of the ship worked the cordwood free. "The pianos got loose. Snapping of wires was heard all over the ship. Father lost money on that cargo," Garfield wrote.<sup>14</sup>

B. Aymer summed up: "Father's days were done with the passing of mother. They were pals . . ." Garfield put it even more clearly: "When she died, then father never recovered. He was like a ship with a broken rudder."



*The Voyage of the Liberdade*

SLOCUM HAD owned the *Aquidneck* two years when, at the end of a voyage, he went to Massachusetts to see his young children who were parceled out among his sisters, Alice and Etta, at Natick. Victor, now fourteen, remained with his father. The captain was "sad and very much alone, seeking company and a remedy for his lonely life," wrote B. Aymar.<sup>1</sup> In his search for guidance, he even went to a spiritualist—not an unusual move in that more credulous age.

On that visit, he met a first cousin who, coming from the same bleak coast as himself, had emigrated to Massachusetts and become a seamstress and dressmaker. He had not known her in Nova Scotia, however, because she arrived two years after he had left. Henrietta Miller Elliott, or Hettie as she was called, was born in Annapolis County in 1862, and so was eighteen years younger than Slocum. She was now twenty-four, and pretty. The captain was forty-two, and lonely. He was "an ardent person, certainly demonstrative in showing affection," a relative wrote, "and Hettie was no doubt bedazzled by his attentions when he was considered successful."<sup>2</sup>

An analysis of Slocum's handwriting\* shows "the con-

\* Although graphology has been taught many years in leading universities and institutes in Europe, and for the past seven at the New School

sistent repression of a strong sensuousness and a need for actual closeness . . . some pasty (sensuous) lines present at all times but most frequent in the letter of 1885 (the letter to Virginia's mother). The determined pressure of the downstrokes of letters . . . bespeaks an extraordinary desire to prove his masculinity under all circumstances."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the masculine protest, as the handwriting reveals it, is excessive, and must have originated in an enormous intensity, or frustration of longing for feminine warmth.

Captain Joshua and Hettie were married in Boston, 22 February 1886. "Her family was not so keen on the marriage on account of Josh wanting his wife with him on the trips," the same relative wrote. Virginia had been dead nineteen months.

Hettie said of her husband: "I called him Josh, sometimes Joshua, or Captain, if I thought he needed the honor." She said that Slocum spoke his mind freely, "and that it did not hurt his feelings to let you know what he was thinking."\*

for Social Research in New York, some readers may feel that the present writer, in appealing to the authority of handwriting analysis, is hardly less credulous than his subject at the time of consulting a spiritualist. Nevertheless, the fact is that graphology, as a tool for the study of personality, is increasingly understood and appreciated here. It is proving its usefulness to psychiatrists, psychologists, clinicians, social and court workers, teachers, personnel directors, and others interested in supplementing information obtained by other methods of psychological research, for handwriting analysis rests mainly on psychometrically and experimentally verified observations. A recent book, written specifically for American and British audiences, is *Handwriting: a Key to Personality*, by Klara G. Roman, New York, 1952.

\* Said to the present writer, who saw her in July 1952, at West Tisbury, Mass. Hettie died in October of that year, age ninety. She had married twice, and been twice widowed. She had no children.

Six days after their marriage, the captain and Hettie set sail on their wedding trip. The new wife went aboard the same ship, into the very same cabin, in which the old wife had died. Victor went along as mate, and Garfield; the latter, perhaps, for good luck.

The voyage proved to be "filled with adventures common to the life of a sailor."<sup>4</sup>

The *Aquidneck* sailed from New York on a storming day with a cargo of case oil bound for Montevideo. Almost at once, she encountered severe gales. She began to leak, and had to be pumped continuously for thirty-six hours.

After discharging at Montevideo, the *Aquidneck* sailed up the Plata, past Buenos Aires, where Virginia lay buried, to Rosario. There a cargo of baled hay was taken aboard for Rio de Janeiro. However, because of cholera at Rosario, the charter became subject to rapidly changing quarantine restrictions, as well as political reprisals between Brazil and Argentina.

The Brazilian government would not let Slocum proceed to Rio, but ordered him to Ilha Grande, the quarantine station, instead. He arrived there 7 January 1887, was met by the Brazilian turret ship *Aquidiban*, Captain Mello, and ordered in no uncertain terms to clear out at once. The wisest course, at this point, would have been to jettison the disputed hay. But Slocum carried it all the way back and laid up at Rosario until 9 April, when Brazilian ports were declared open.

Three weeks later, the *Aquidneck* sailed into Ilha Grande for the second time, with the same cargo of hay, and finally to Rio. The captain wrote: "The cargo was at last delivered and no one was made ill over it. A change

of rats also was made; at Rio those we brought in gave place to others from the Dom Pedro Docks where we moored. Fleas, too, skipped about in the hay, as happy as larks, and nearly as big; and all the other livestock that we brought from Rosario—goodness knows of what kind and kith, arrived well and sound from over the water, notwithstanding the fumigations and fuss made at the quarantine.”<sup>a</sup> This is typical of Slocum’s account of subsequent events. It is not the style in which ships’ logs are usually written, but then the captain was not the usual style of captain.

From Rio, the *Aquidneck* sailed south to Paranagua Bay to pick up a cargo of maté for Montevideo. “July 23, 1887, brings me to a sudden and shocking point in the history of the voyage that I fain would forget but that will not be possible,” Slocum wrote later. “Between the hours of 11 and 12 p. m. of this day, I was called instantly to defend my life and all that is dear to a man.”<sup>a</sup> Some of the cut-throat crew Slocum had shipped at Rosario had planned to murder and rob him. The behavior of their ringleader had been so threatening that Hettie had been unable to sleep. It was she who heard the first footsteps on the poop deck, and by waking her husband probably saved his life.

When he came on deck, the mutineers jeeringly challenged Slocum to order them forward. He did so. But instead of obeying, they attacked him with knives. Slocum shot two of his assailants with his .56 carbine, killing one of them.

This was a calamity for which he had to stand trial. While on parole, he engaged a Spanish master to take the

*Aquidneck* to Montevideo. After being discharged by the Brazilian court, he joined his ship there. But hard luck followed. The crew contracted smallpox. Only three men, one of whom was young Victor, were well enough to work the ship. Half the crew died.

Getting back to Paranagua Bay in sorry condition, the *Aquidneck* went into the timber business. But then the captain discovered that he did not have the right kind of longboat for cruising in the inlets. He decided to build one. Its length was dictated by the space between poop and deck house.

After spending Christmas 1887 at Guarakasava, the *Aquidneck* was loaded and started across Paranagua Bay for the ocean. But "currents and wind caught her foul" near a sandbar, and she "stranded broadside on, where, open to the sea, a strong swell came in that raked her fore and aft for three days, the waves dashing over her groaning hull the while, till at last her back was broke—and why not add her heart as well! for she lay now undone." She was uninsured. "When the *Aquidneck* was lost," Garfield wrote, "then father lost all of his money and our beautiful home."<sup>8</sup>

The wreck was sold, and the crew paid off from the proceeds. But not enough money was left to buy passage home for the captain, his wife and sons. In this plight, Slocum might have applied to the nearest U. S. Consul, one of whose functions it is to repatriate destitute mariners. Only, of course, that was not Captain Slocum's way. Slocum, in his black business suit, and black felt hat, was the archetype of the proud, self-reliant Yankee skipper. A man of his calling, commitments, and purpose was bound

to return in a boat of his own command, his own deck under his feet, if he had to build her himself. And in this case he did.

After removing his compass, charts, chronometer, "most of our luggage and some of the furniture" from the stranded *Aquidneck*, Slocum decided to complete the longboat begun on her deck. In spite of a jungle fever, he set to work. He had only a poor kit of tools, but he had good help from Victor and native sawyers. Hettie, the ex-seamstress, did her part. "Madame made the sails . . . and very good sails they were, too."<sup>9</sup>

On 13 May 1888, the little craft, half Cape Ann dory, half Japanese sampan, was launched. She was named *Liberdade*, because it was the day on which the Brazilian slaves were freed. Her length was 35 feet overall, her breadth 7½, and 3 feet was her depth of hold. "Who shall say that she was not large enough?"<sup>10</sup>

How the *Liberdade*, armed with a license to catch fish "inside or outside the bar," succeeded in carrying the captain and his wife and two sons from the scene of the disaster was told later by the Ulysses of the voyage. "The old boating trick came back fresh to me, the love of the thing itself gaining on me as the little ship stood out: and my crew with one voice said: 'Go on.'"<sup>11</sup>

The *Liberdade* drove north, but rounding Santos Heads, a squall burst on her which tore her sails to shreds, and sent her into Santos under bare poles. As is often the way with sailors in foreign ports, Slocum met a friend, Captain Baker of the mail steamship U. S. S. *Finance*, about to depart for Rio. Captain Baker gave the Slocums a tow over very rough water. "Hettie and I were on board

the steamer," Garfield wrote, "and we would stand and watch for the *Liberdade* to come up over a huge wave. Father had a lot of nerve, strength, and will power. He steered all day and all night. Victor sat in the fore-peak under a tarpaulin, an ax in his lap to cut the hawser in case the *Liberdade* turned over. Father had a lanyard tied to Victor's wrist. Father would pull on it and Victor responded with a pull. Both were wonderful men—plenty of courage and brains and endurance."<sup>12</sup>

On 23 July 1888, the *Liberdade* sailed from Rio. When the "canoe" encountered a whale who lazily scratched its enormous back on the little keel, Slocum quietly noted that "for broad rippling humor, the whale has no equal." There were experiences with dangerous reefs and treacherous natives, but confidence in "the thin cedar planks between the crew and eternity" grew steadily. By the middle of August, the *Liberdade* had reached Salvador. From there she sailed to Pernambuco.

After leaving the latter place, the Family Slocum had its narrowest call. Sailing toward the mouth of the Amazon, Slocum steered too close to shore. Once clear of the horrible danger of combers breaking over the shoals, the captain observed that "any weather that one's craft can live in, after escaping from a lee shore, is pleasant weather—though some may be pleasanter than others."<sup>13</sup>

The sailing was fair as they neared the line. One night a "phantom of the stately *Aquidneck* appeared . . . sweeping by with crowning skysails set, that fairly brushed the stars. No apparition could have affected us more than the sight of this floating beauty, so like the *Aquidneck*, gliding swiftly and quietly by . . ."<sup>14</sup>

On the nineteenth day out from Pernambuco, the *Liberdade* made the Barbados. Her course now lay through the Caribbean to the coast of South Carolina. Then it was pleasant inland sailing to Washington, D. C., where the captain and his crew arrived 27 December 1888. The Slocums had sailed some 5,500 miles in 53 days, in a boat which cost "less than a hundred dollars outside of our own labor of building." More than that, they had "learned to love the little canoe as well as anything could be loved that is made by hands."

After complimenting the crew on its bravery, the captain added for himself: "With all its vicissitudes I still love a life on the broad, free ocean, never regretting the choice of my profession."<sup>15</sup>

In Washington, where the Slocums remained the winter, the captain, a celebrity as a result of the remarkable small-boat voyage, was photographed by Mathew B. Brady. Slocum's performance had brought a measure of fame, but no money; and no job.

When spring came again, he and Hettie and the crew of the *Liberdade* cast off from the Potomac River dock, where the boat had been moored since its arrival, and sailed to New York by the inland waterway. In New York, Hettie gave her version of the voyage to a writer for the *New York World*. It was a different, and less enthusiastic, story than the one the captain was writing.

"Tales of Capt. Slocum and his wonderful small boat, *La Libertad* (sic), have been told far and wide . . . THE WORLD wanted to know what the 'Captain's Captain,' Mrs. Slocum, had to say about it, and sent a reporter down to the small boat, bobbing and rolling with every ripple of



the tide that flowed around the gray stone walls of the Barge Office, close to which La Libertad was anchored.

“‘Can you get in?’

“This question was Mrs. Slocum’s greeting when her husband introduced the reporter, whom he had just handed on board, and who stood at the entrance to the low, canvas-covered deck-house, the only shelter afforded by the limited accommodations of the boat. The hostess sat in the wee cabin on a plank running the length and raised about three inches from the deck. A sitting posture was the only attitude possible unless one chose to lie down. Mrs. Slocum is a young, strong (some words missing here) full brow; bright hazel eyes, a remarkably well-formed ‘nez,’ a frank smiling mouth, and a chin expressing both firmness and tenderness, are the features of an oval face which has acquired a rich bronze tint from months of exposure to tropical suns and ocean breezes. Here is the face of a woman who would be capable of the most devoted, intrepid deeds, done in the quietest and most matter-of-fact way, and never voluntarily spoken of afterwards.

“She wore yesterday a dark blue serge yachting dress, with short skirt and blouse waist trimmed with rows of white braid, and a blue straw sailor hat, which she had taken off and was holding in her slender brown hand.

“Mrs. Slocum’s voice is low and full-toned, although she says she is from Boston—that region of thin, high-pitched feminine utterance. Her manner is gentle, and she spoke with some reluctance of her voyage.

“‘It is an experience I should not care to repeat, al-

though now that it is mine I feel a certain satisfaction in having gone through it . . .

“‘Just there’—pointing outside the entrance—‘stood two big water casks. Behind them provisions were stowed. There’s the stove over which we did our cooking.’ It was a small iron pot on three legs, in which a handful of charcoal could be kindled. ‘When we reached colder latitudes, in November, we sometimes used it to heat the cabin, letting the gas burn off and then placing it at the entrance.’

“‘Didn’t you grow weary and lonely during the long voyage?’

“‘The loneliness came and went early in the voyage. The weariness grew because it was impossible to get any exercise. There was no chance to walk on the narrow deck, and much of the time it was not possible even to stand outside.’

“‘Were you more oppressed by a sense of loneliness when you first embarked?’

“‘Yes. When we left Rio they gave us a great send-off. Capt. Slocum had obtained a permit to all ports duty-free, from the marine office, and also had been granted permission to sail under the flag of Brazil. They thought it a great honor to allow so small a craft to carry their colors. Crowds of people assembled on the quays to see us off and they cheered us wildly. It was very exciting. Then, as the land grew dim in the distance and finally faded from sight, it seemed very desolate on the sea.

“‘In a few days, however, I had learned to like the life on board—I became accustomed to my surroundings, and was not only contented but happy. We had plenty

of books when we started, at several ports where we stopped we got more, and the steamship which we spoke\* gave us a quantity of magazines. Wherever we touched, the most lively interest was manifested, and when we went ashore we were delightfully entertained. At Porto Rico we lay two days. The United States Consul there invited us to dine and drove us out to his father's plantation, where we had a charming time.'

"Are you going on another voyage, Mrs. Slocum?"

"Oh, I hope not. I haven't been home in over three years, and this was my wedding journey.'

"Mrs. Slocum said she was going from here to Boston for a visit, adding:

"I shall travel by rail. I have had enough sailing to last me for a long time.'"<sup>16</sup>

A year later, Slocum sailed back to Washington in the *Liberdade* and presented the boat to the Smithsonian Institution. In all that time he had not been able to get a ship. With steam cutting deeper and deeper into sail, there were not enough sailing ships to go around. Furthermore, his record as master was far from spotless.

At this point Slocum was unable to support his family, which certainly must have been bitter to a man of pride and belief in himself; and Hettie had to retreat to those very relations who had not wanted her to marry the captain in the first place. The alliance with Hettie which, as a relative wrote, "was to keep a home for his children and himself," was put to a very great strain. "Naturally," the same relative wrote further, "after the Aquidneck wreck

\* To communicate by voice or signal with a vessel passing at sea is to speak it.

and the voyage home in the *Liberdade*, Hettie found she was not wholly for that life. It was bad all around taking Virginia's place as a wife and trying to do right by the children."<sup>17</sup>

Within the space of five years Slocum had lost wife, ship, and worldly fortune. He was forty-five, and in debt. Now his profession was gone as well. He never secured another command. The age of steam had fully arrived, while Slocum remained in the age of sail.

As a merchantman, Slocum was defeated at last—but only to prove that in the long run there need be no indignity in defeat. The voyage in the *Liberdade* had carried him further than he knew. Both the voyage itself, and the book he wrote about it, foreshadowed the great voyage and great book to come.

*What was there for an old  
sailor to do?*

CAPTAIN JOSHUA and Hettie returned to East Boston in the summer of 1889. Hettie went to live with a sister. Jessie and Garfield went with her. "Father did not come to that house," Garfield wrote.<sup>1</sup> By that time Victor and B. Aymar was each on his own. B. Aymar said his father "spent much of his time in contacting his former business associates, seeking a lead to something acceptable."<sup>2</sup> But nothing acceptable came along.

Slocum, at rock bottom, turned to himself. He still had all his resourcefulness. For a man with no schooling to think of becoming a writer seems going pretty far afield. But for the merchantman of literary talent it was not too far. "All the education he ever got," went a newspaper account of the captain, "was on the water, but he is an encyclopedia now . . ."<sup>3</sup> When he found he was important in no other way, then Captain Slocum turned author.

The captain finished writing *Voyage of the Liberdade* while staying with his aunt, Naomi Slocombe Gates (his father's sister), whose house at 69 Saratoga Street was the family meeting place. In 1890, he had his story printed at his own expense.\* The little book, now very rare, still

\* Press of Robinson & Stephenson, 91 Oliver Street, Boston. On verso

has a genteel, Victorian appearance. Less than 5x7 inches in size, 175 pages of passable paper, it was decently clothed in dark green, as though determined on keeping up appearances while scarcely having the means to do so. Indeed, one wonders where the money to pay the printer came from. Not many copies could have been issued. Not many were called for. Few are the libraries which own, or ever owned, a copy.

To the title page of his first book, the captain added: "Description of a Voyage 'Down to the Sea.'" It was, he explained, written with "a hand, alas! that has grasped the sextant more often than the plane or pen."<sup>4</sup> This was hardly an 'apology," as he called it. It was more a proud boast. And well it might be, for *Voyage of the Liberdade* is a first-rate, true sea-story, a moving evocation of the seafarer's life, told simply, directly, and sometimes humorously, the kind of narrative of actual experience which a Melville, with a few additions, might have transformed into literary art.

It is not unheard of that a man without formal education should write well. What is remarkable, however, in this instance, is that so much reading did not spoil the writing. Captain Slocum had a passion for books, yet his style was not imitative. Part of the explanation may be that no matter what he was doing, he never lost his identity. He never forgot who he was. If he did not bring literary finish to the work, he brought instead the savor of salt water, and his own world-view. He always spoke in a voice entirely his own. A Yankee skipper and trader, he

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of the title page was printed, "Copyrighted 1890, by Captain Joshua Slocum."

was already well accustomed to an exact and pungent use of words. In setting his course in the new element, he took no unnecessary chances. His professional instincts were sharp. What the whale-ship was to Melville—his Yale College and his Harvard—the square-rigged merchantman had been to Slocum.

But in spite of its excellence, the book went widely unread. Among journals and magazines of the day, only *The Critic* noticed it. In its issue of 5 July 1890, its young co-editor, Joseph B. Gilder, wrote an enthusiastic review.\* To him goes the credit for discovering the sailor-writer. He understood perfectly that the captain's authentic qualities could not be questioned. "The merits of the book . . . are clearly attributable to the author," Gilder wrote. "The thing has not been 'licked into shape for him.'" Joe Gilder turned out to be a great friend to "the indomitable old salt," as he called the captain. His review eventually helped Slocum find a publisher. But at the time it could not save the book, and the author, from financial failure.<sup>5</sup>

Slocum, down in East Boston, was "clean worked out."<sup>6</sup> It was only ten years since he had brought the *Northern Light* from Hong Kong to New York. Gone now were such

\* A few words about *The Critic*: it was founded in New York in 1881, by Jeannette Leonard Gilder (1849-1916), and Joseph Benson Gilder (1858-1936). "Jean and Joe start a paper here next Saturday," their brother, Richard Watson Gilder, poet and editor of *The Century Magazine*, wrote. "It is to be called the Critic. It is a wild thing to do, but they have had . . . lots of encouragement." (Gilder, Rosamond, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, Boston, 1916, p. 106.) Jean and Joe did not have much money to put into the venture, but they had ability, industry and pluck. Their magazine, one of the first to invite Walt Whitman to contribute, was also the first to publish Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories outside Harris's home town, Atlanta. Book reviewing, however, was the main business..

proud feats. Gone was the romance of sail. In ten years, Slocum had climbed from the top of the ladder to the bottom. When the book failed to sell, it was no longer a matter of finding "something acceptable." The captain had to take anything he could get.

"One day," he later told a sympathetic newspaperman, "when I was doing a bit of an odd job on a boat and a whole lot of coal and dirt mixed—Cape Horn berries they call the stuff—came down all about my face and neck, I stood up, thought of the difference between my state and when I was master of the Northern Light, and quit the job."

Garfield wrote that his father told him he was offered a berth as captain by the White Star Line, but that he refused. "I asked father why. He told me, 'I followed the sea in sailing ships since I was fourteen years old. If I accepted this offer, I would have to get used to steamships, and I do not like steamships.'" Slocum went to work as a carpenter in the famous McKay shipyards in Boston, but he did not stay long. "They asked me if I belonged to any union. Then they wanted to know what church I was a member of. It cost \$50 to get into the union and I hadn't the cash. It didn't seem to suffice that I belonged to God's great church that knew no bounds of creed or sect . . ." Times were hard. A financial panic was impending.

Then, on a wintry day in 1892, in Boston, where Slocum, walking the waterfront streets, was wondering whether to try once more for a command, or try again at the shipyard, he met an old friend, a prosperous, retired whaleman. Captain Eben Pierce (pronounced Purse) was his name. He was the inventor and pioneer manufacturer



of the whale bomb lance and gun. When he died, ten years later, he was described as "one of the last remaining relics of the old whaling days."\*

The ex-whaleman said to the ex-merchantman: "Come to Fairhaven and I'll give you a ship. But," he added, "she wants some repairs."<sup>10</sup>

Slocum went at once. It was, as he later wrote, "a time when many worthy captains addressed themselves to Sailors Snug Harbor."<sup>11</sup>

Captain Pierce lived in Fairhaven on New Bedford harbor. The two places are joined by a bridge across the Acushnet River. Fairhaven, very much the smaller of the two, had been one of the New England seaport towns that had dominated the whaling industry in its greatest period. Even before the '90's, its whaling fleet had been wiped out. Fishing interests, however, were still important, though town and township together comprised less than 3,000 persons. Except for the new buildings given by a native son grown rich on Standard rather than whale oil, Fairhaven had the quiet, brooding aspect of a New England town declining into a summer resort.

When Slocum arrived there the very next day, he found that his whaling friend had "something of a joke" on him. The ship in question was an ancient oyster sloop called the *Spray*. She was said to have been one hundred years old, and for the past seven years had been lying out high and dry in a pasture. She was battered by time and rotted by disuse, but to Slocum's longing eyes she was beautiful.

\* "Killed by an Electric," was the headline on his obituary (*Boston Herald* 9 May 1902). After surviving the hazards of the sea, and a whaler's life, Captain Pierce, past 80, unmarried, was cut down by a trolley.

To him she appeared "affectionately propped up . . . some distance from salt water."

In short, the *Spray*, like Slocum, was on the beach. A Yankee shipmaster does not wear his heart on his sleeve, and what the captain felt at this moment, he never described. But the sight of the old boat whose sailing days, like his own, were finished, stirred him deeply. And there is a kind of pity which is also love. One can be sure that, as between Slocum and the *Spray*, it was a matter of destiny. From the hour of their meeting they were never really to be parted.

The people of Fairhaven were puzzled by the captain's interest in the old wreck. "The day I appeared there was a buzz at the gossip exchange: at last someone had come and was actually at work on the old *Spray*. 'Breaking her up, I s'pose?' 'No; going to rebuild her.' Great was the amazement. 'Will it pay?' was the question which for a year or more I answered by declaring that I would make it pay."<sup>12</sup>

If Slocum built for the joy of building, he could not say so to the whaling captains who stopped by to gam. But once started on the work, he was in a good state of mind, probably happier than at any time since Virginia had died. "The seasons came quickly . . . Hardly were the ribs of the sloop up before apple trees were in bloom. Then the daisies and cherries came soon after." It was a nice situation. On the one hand was the captain's love for the old sailing boat. On the other, the simple fact he had nothing better to do. "By dint of hard work, steady application and some skill at shipbuilding," as he told a reporter, he managed to rebuild the craft entire.<sup>13</sup>

The fact is, all that Slocum retained of the sloop was the model, or original lines. As he rebuilt, he put in new timbers as fast as he removed the old. When he was in need of the right kind of lumber, he had easy recourse to the wooded areas nearby, and to pasture oak in the pasture in which he had set up his improvised shipyard. He was an old hand at that sort of thing. Perhaps, as he worked with plane or adz, he sometimes recalled how, long ago, he built the hull at far-away Olongapo; or thought of the *Liberdade*, built only five years before, and how well he had sailed in that little craft.

During the time Slocum was rebuilding his boat, he lived in Fairhaven with the practical-joking, but good-hearted, Captain Pierce.<sup>14</sup> Pierce was a bachelor in fact, Slocum, in a manner of speaking. There was nothing and no one to disturb them. B. Aymer visited his father, and inspected the new *Spray* coming to life. Garfield wrote that he liked Captain Pierce very much. Hettie, meanwhile, remained in East Boston, either with relatives, or down the street from Aunt Naomi's, where she and the captain had rented on and off before he went to Fairhaven. It is likely she worked at her trade for her living.

Slocum took thirteen months to complete the *Spray*. Cash outlay was \$553.62. To obtain the money, a real sum in those days and circumstances, he worked on ships fitting out farther down the harbor. He had to live, too, but his living expenses were bound to be very small. His boyhood experience and the New England influence had taught him how to manage with little. If Slocum had the puritan acquisitiveness, the sea had taken his worldly goods, and left him the puritan simplicity. He had no fear

of poverty. He was rediscovering the joy of lean living in a world increasingly dependent on material objects.

The day of launching finally came. The little craft of doubtful build and distressing plainness was pushed into the river without fanfare. But for Slocum, "she sat on the water like a swan." She was 36 feet, 9 inches overall, 14 feet, 2 inches wide, and 4 feet, 2 inches deep in the hold. Her gross tonnage was just under 13 tons.

A "smart New Hampshire spruce" was now fitted for a mast. Sails were bent, and the *Spray* with Captain Slocum and Captain Pierce on board, went flying across Buzzards Bay on her shake-down cruise. All went well, but friends along the shore still worried: would she pay? Before the matter could be put to the test, Captain Joshua very unexpectedly was offered a position on a ship—his first real job in five years.

*Home on the Spray*

WHILE SLOCUM had been building quietly in Fairhaven, civil war had come to his old trading grounds, Brazil. The conflict, like all armed conflicts, brought disaster to some, and opportunity to others. In this one, Slocum picked up a navigator's berth, a promise of wartime rates of pay for his trouble, and as it turned out, the subject for another book.

Leaving the *Spray* moored in Fairhaven, Slocum turned once more to Brazil. On 6 September 1893, Admiral Custodio de Mello, on board the warship *Aquidibã*, had taken command of the naval forces at Rio, and become the head of the insurgent factions demanding the resignation of General Floriano Peixoto, the dictatorial president of the country.

To meet the revolt, which had been brewing some time, Peixoto's agents abroad had been instructed to buy up whatever warships they could. In the United States, they bought the *Destroyer*, an iron gunboat, 130 feet long, designed and built by the famous John Ericsson who had died four years earlier and had left the novel craft untested. It was Ericsson who had designed the *Monitor*, the first armored turret ship, and which had fought the *Merrimac*. Later he had developed a "des-

troyer" system<sup>1</sup>—that is, a submarine torpedo and a means of discharging it—and embodied it in a boat of that name.\* But a long period of peace had prevented him from trying it out.

Slocum was an admirer of the Swedish-born engineer, and the *Destroyer*.<sup>2</sup> He was perfectly confident of being able to pilot the Ericsson invention to Brazil, though her seaworthiness had been, from the first, a matter of dispute. While he could not get a command in the merchant service, for this kind of hazardous undertaking he found plenty of backing. "Capt. Slocum was highly recommended . . . The American Shipmasters Association vouched for him, as did Edwin Henry Salmon, surveyor to Lloyds."<sup>3</sup> The torpedo wonder was hastily patched up, and Slocum, as "navigator in command," put to sea.

The naval insurrection and civil war had had a long and complicated background, and it developed into a long and murderous struggle. Thousands of lives were lost, and, in the words of the historian, "social and economic unity thoroughly disrupted."<sup>4</sup>

There is no indication, however, that causes or outcome, or any of the unsolved problems, or individual tragedies, were of any particular interest to Slocum, except as they affected shipping.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, he was very much a part of his age. He shared the general outlook of a rising imperial nation.

The captain's interest in lending "a hand to the legal government of a people in whose country I had spent many happy days . . ."<sup>6</sup> was strictly personal. He had old scores to settle. It had been the same de Mello, on the same

\* The prototype of the destroyer, and PT boat.

*Aquidiban*, who, in 1887, had prevented the *Aquidneck* from proceeding to Rio, a move, so Captain Slocum argued, which ultimately had led to the loss of his ship. Now with a cargo of dynamite instead of hay, Slocum could cheerfully look forward to another encounter.

However, Slocum and de Mello did not meet. In fact, the *Destroyer* never saw action. After an unbelievably difficult voyage, Slocum made Bahia in February, 1894, and handed over the vessel to Brazilian sailors. But the new crew was careless, disloyal, or simply had no stomach for fighting, or for Yankee engines of war. When they scuttled the *Destroyer* in the harbor, they also sank Slocum's prospects of pay. He did not get any of the \$20,000 he was promised.<sup>7</sup> As soon as he could, he found passage north.

Returning from the war, broke, Slocum went straight to the one he had left behind. There, where she was moored, he sat down and wrote a footnote to history, *Voyage of the Destroyer from New York to Brazil*. "From the quiet cabin of my home on the *Spray*, the reminiscence of a war."

The reminiscence gives a Gilbertian account of a voyage as remarkable in its melodramatic way as that earlier one on the *Liberdade*. From Slocum's point of view, it had been an opéra bouffe war. "The revolt began in Rio . . . the date don't much matter. The funny war so far as the navy was concerned finished of itself in March, 1894. No historian can ever say more.

"They may tell of hot firing and hot fires but it was by the heat of the sun, and by that child of filth, yellow fever, that most lives were lost. In this way . . . some of the

members of our own expedition were taken. Were it not indeed for these darker shades, I could now look back with unalloyed pleasure over the voyage of the *Destroyer*; the voyage of past hardships, now so pleasant to bear.”<sup>8</sup>

Again, Slocum had his work printed at his own expense.\* The further he drifted from the position of command, the greater was his need to be heard and noticed. He now had the outer as well as the inner urge to write. He actually suffered privation in order to publish the book. According to Victor, 500 copies were printed.<sup>9</sup> However, almost none have survived. Paper and paper-binding were so poor that most copies must have fallen to pieces. The 37-page book is now rare, indeed. The Library of Congress does not have a copy, probably because the captain could not afford the copyright fee. Slocum did not try to sell the book. He gave it away.†

“It Reads Like a Romance,” a newspaper notice said of Slocum’s second book. It is “as valuable from an historical

\* Press of Robinson Printing Company, Boston, 1894.

† He gave one as a Christmas present (so he wrote in a letter to Eugene Hardy), to Professor Samuel Pierpont Langley, inventor and author, and at that time secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. But the Smithsonian Library does not have it. The present writer knows of three copies: one in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Library, State House, Boston; one which was Victor Slocum’s, and now belongs to his niece, Catherine Woodruff; and his own. The first, with corrections and additions in Slocum’s hand, was apparently given by him to the Library, 8 August 1894. The second was presented by the captain, 17 October 1896, at Manly, N. S. W., to M. S. Brown, the U. S. Consul at Sydney. The third also has corrections and additions written by Slocum. It is inscribed: “To Commodore John A. Stetson compts of the author.” But if all copies had been lost, a version of the text would still exist. *Voyage of the Destroyer* was edited and published by McClure’s magazine in March 1900, after the captain had become famous. It has not been reissued since.



as from an amusing standpoint.”<sup>10</sup> But Lieutenant Carlos A. Rivers of the British marines, a much decorated fellow-officer on board the *Destroyer*, whom Slocum had lampooned, did not think the book funny. Because of Slocum’s remarks about him, the lieutenant challenged the captain to a duel. Slocum said to the newspaperman who acted as self-appointed second: “It is better that I catch fish than fight him. Just say that I am a man with a big fist. Do anything to discourage a duel. Good day.”<sup>11</sup>

The voyage of the *Destroyer* was a digression from the mainstream of Slocum’s life. It was a job undertaken in desperation, and desperate it proved to be. After facing danger and death, Slocum tried to shrug it off in a piece of humoristic writing. But he was disappointed at the loss of the promised pay. In the world’s reckoning, however, it is fortunate that the captain did not get the money. Instead, he got on with the real purpose of his life.

The outer problem now was to make the *Spray* pay. Slocum’s first idea was fishing. “I had intended using her as a fishing boat,” he told a reporter, “and did do a bit of it after she was launched, but, good Lord, I couldn’t seem to get any fish and when I went lobstering all I could get was short lobsters and after that I’d get in jail if I kept on so I gave it up.”<sup>12</sup> Though in his younger years, the captain had fished in the Pacific, and in the Okhotsk Sea, he found in the summer of 1894 that he “had not the cunning properly to bait a hook.”<sup>13</sup>

While Slocum lived alone on the *Spray*, the great idea must have been germinating. For that summer he was not only fishing, but sailing—getting the feel of the boat. In fact, he almost wrecked her before getting really started.

Garfield wrote he was with the captain "on board the Spray, outbound from an inlet on the Maine coast. There was very little wind. Father was steering. As the Spray almost passed a ledge on the leeward, the powerful undertow lifted her and dropped her on the ledge. The waves tried to finish the Spray. Some help came quickly to our aid by land and sea. Father threw a coil of rope to some men on shore. He tied me under my arm pits, held one end of the rope, and told me to jump. The men pulled me to high ground. Other men, in dories, got the Spray off, and towed her to a place where father repaired her bottom."<sup>14</sup>

But at the same time, he hoped to make a dollar by writing. While waiting around, uncertain of the next move, he got Roberts Brothers,\* a well-known Boston publishing house, more on the literary than the commercial side, to take on his first book.<sup>15</sup> He took them the plates of *Voyage of the Liberdade* which, of course, were his. He had paid for them four years earlier. Corrections were made, and illustrations added. These cost \$100—which sum was charged to Slocum's account. Roberts Brothers printed 1000 copies at their own expense. The printing cost 7½ cents a copy, the binding 14 cents. They put out a neat and pretty job, with a choice of color of binding, red, yellow, or blue. Publication was in September 1894. The price of the book was \$1. Slocum's royalty was 10 per cent.<sup>16</sup> If the entire edition had been sold in the usual way, he would merely have recovered costs of corrections. However, by peddling the book himself, he did a little better than that.

\* The firm sold out to Little, Brown and Company, in 1898.

Well, if there was little money in it, there was satisfaction, and prestige. And through it Slocum made friends. Garfield wrote: "Father had a party out sailing, men and women all from Roberts Brothers. We anchored off two lighthouses off Boston harbor. Some fished. One man put up 50 cents prize money for the person catching the first fish. I caught the first fish but was not able to pull him in. A man standing next to me did it for me. The fish weighed 12 pounds, a codfish. Father made a fish chowder. Everybody said it was delicious. Some of the men brought bottles of liquid refreshment which we tied on a line and lowered over the side to cool. Everyone enjoyed the outing."<sup>17</sup>

Slocum was delighted with Roberts Brothers' new edition. He was ready to take half of it. From Pemaquid Beach, Maine, where he was sailing the *Spray*, 18 September 1894, he wrote:

Messrs Roberts Brothers

*Dear Sirs:*

Referring to the book "Voyage of the *Liberdade*," I believe I would like to take 500 copies . . .

The rough word spoken of when I was at your office, Sirs I think is on page 48 in the last line, which for a holiday book to be sure should not be there even in quotation. Please expunge and slip in some other word.

I would dearely love to revise the little book throughout.

Have tried to do so but as often as I have tried I have fallen into the same faults of style: too earnestly

in the fight on decks: too gloriously free in the boat  
on the broad ocean . . .

The best that may be done I fear will be to let it  
go as a sailors book . . .

Very respectfully  
/s/ Joshua Slocum<sup>18</sup>

The "rough word" which worried the captain is, in its quotes, "busted in the jaw." Roberts Brothers left it in. It did not offend their Victorian ear. But then they did not have as extreme a need for respectable appearance. Slocum's handwriting shows he took every care to veil the antagonisms he felt. There are movements which express aggression and anger, while others indicate an utmost endeavor to achieve reserve and control.

*Resolved on a Voyage  
Around the World*

NOBODY KNOWS just when or how Slocum got the idea of sailing around the world alone. But from the beginning, perhaps unawares, he had been preparing for it. All the experience he had met with in life had conspired to dare him to do it. At the same time, his interests had been narrowing, till by 1894 all that was left him was the urge to sail, and the urge to excel and be recognized. There was something he wanted to escape to. There was something he wanted to escape from. The only solace lay in action.

The captain wrote simply: "I had resolved on a voyage around the world . . ." But one knows that a voyage is never that simple. A man's activities have their obscurer aspects. They do not always arise from conscious sources.

It seems likely that the shape and spirit of the *Spray* must have helped shape the idea. She was blunt and beamy and had plenty of room on deck; her bows, bluff and full. Her long clean lines suggested the lines of a barge. The one graceful touch was her cutwater.

Forward, was a small forecabin with a couple of bunks. Aft, was a larger cabin under a low house. Slocum's berth was in the cabin. He could cook, eat, read, sew, and sleep

there. He could cook on deck as well. The wheel was only a step or two abaft the companionway. The bulwarks were low, but "a stout, hard pine rail with stanchions"<sup>1</sup> provided a hold for hands, and afforded support in a seaway. The freeboard, typical of a Delaware oysterman, was low, but the *Spray*, as Slocum sailed her, was a dry sailer.

The *Spray* was comfortable. She was a home. A visitor wrote of the cabin, "lined with books . . . the cozy and liveable atmosphere, not like a 'yacht' at all, but more like that of the master of an old-fashioned, full-rigged ship."<sup>2</sup>

The rig of the *Spray* at that time was the ordinary one of a sloop with mainsail and jib. A short topmast was carried for signaling. She was a very big boat for one man to handle. Garfield wrote that when he and his father hoisted the mainsail, he would take the peak halyards, while the captain took the throat halyards. "It was a job for two people. The mainsail and gaff were heavy. I know it was hard for him to raise it when he was alone."<sup>3</sup> The sheets were, of course, belayed aft.

Since Slocum's time, several replicas of the *Spray* have been built by admiring yachtsmen. The present writer was aboard one. It had a few improvements which Slocum managed without: a diesel engine, generator, electric lights, 11-cubic-foot refrigerator, hot and cold running water and shower, gas for cooking, a thermostatically controlled heating plant for cool weather, ship-to-shore phone, radio, radio direction finder, automatic pilot, and a paid hand to run her. The quality of sailing has changed. In 1895, the changes had barely begun.

Of "labor-saving appliances" on the *Spray*, "there were

none.”<sup>4</sup> There were no time-saving devices, either. The captain had time enough. It was really quite simple, for the age of inexorable convenience had not yet arrived. Slocum relied only on himself, on the boat he had made, and on “the buoyancy of His hand who made all the worlds.”<sup>5</sup>

Slocum had circled the globe five times, but preparations for a voyage alone were something to think about. It had never been done. There was no pattern to follow. When he began getting ready in earnest, his first thought was of books. From his Aunt Naomi’s, he wrote Eugene Hardy, the general manager of Roberts Brothers: “If you could let me have the books you so kindly spoke of the other day . . . it would be a great help to me I am sure for I shall have some time to read . . .”<sup>6</sup>

The books came, and on 9 January 1895, Slocum, sounding more like a professor of literature than a deep-water sailor, acknowledged them.

*Dear Mr. Hardy:*

The handsome pkg. of books from Messrs Roberts Brothers for the Spray library is greatly appreciated. I will be very glad to take the *Liberdades* (50) on the terms mentioned . . .

I am completely fascinated with the new books: with Mr. Stephensons but above all with this new book: *Life and Adventures of John Gladwin Jebb* by his Widdow. In this case at least, I think The “Widows mite” a Sovereign Coin to all of us: I think that Thackeray Goldsmith or even Washington Irving might have written this charming book. It carries me back to Vanity Fair, Vicar of Wakefield, to Astoria and even

to Granada: "*Quien Sabe* there was no time to bury the dead in those days" Mr. Jebb will be along with me on the voyage:

A thousand thanks

/s/ Joshua Slocum<sup>7</sup>

Roberts Brothers' very latest publication, *A Strange Career*—life and adventures of J. G. Jebb by his widow, with an introduction by H. Rider Haggard, meant something to Slocum. "Rarely if ever in this nineteenth century," Haggard wrote of Jebb, "has a man lived so strange and varied an existence . . . From the time that he came to manhood he was a wanderer, and how it chanced that he survived the many perils of his daily life is nothing less than a mystery. In the end, however, they brought his fate upon him prematurely . . ."

Slocum was enchanted by the wife's account of the adventurous, athletic, sanguine, and gullible husband. John Beveridge Gladwyn Jebb, the soldier, recalled Rawdon Crawley. His endless misfortunes seemed like the Vicar of Wakefield's. Jebb, in the Northwest, reminded Slocum of Irving's history of Astor and the fur trade. Jebb, seeking lost mines and fighting Mexicans, was reminiscent of the struggles of the Moors.

It is not hard to see why this history of riches to rags aroused in Slocum, at that particular moment, more fellow-feeling than literary acuteness. A more scientific and objective mind might have seen in Jebb's story simply a case of extreme hypomania.

"Mr. Stephenson's" book (or books) was probably a reference to R. L. S., for at least one Stevenson made



the great voyage with Slocum. Roberts Brothers had several on their list, *An Inland Voyage*, *The Silverado Squatters*, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, and *Treasure Island*.

The *Spray's* library also included Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Newcomb's *Popular Astronomy*, Todd's *Total Eclipses of the Sun*, Bates's *The Naturalist on the Amazons*, Macaulay's *History of England*, Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, Boswell's *Johnson*, a set of Shakespeare, *Don Quixote*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and in "the poet's corner," the works of Lamb, Moore, Burns, Tennyson, and Longfellow.<sup>8</sup>

Still more books were to come from an "old acquaintance," Adam W. Wagnalls, encyclopedist and founder of the firm of Funk and Wagnalls.<sup>9</sup>

Next, the captain made preparations to write. With the help of Eugene Hardy, he got up what he called a syndicate to publish the travel letters he planned to produce. He does not, however, seem to have had firm commitments. *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, for example, would not contract for the series. They wrote they would like him to submit the letters, "we to pay for what is used."<sup>10</sup> *The Boston Globe* was one of the "syndicate." So was *The New York Sun*, and "other newspapers."<sup>11</sup> At last, the captain had the properly commercial and unromantic reply to the vexing question, will it pay; and to the lubberly one, what is the object of the voyage? ". . . it is mainly to make money,"<sup>12</sup> Slocum said. "I shall send accounts of my trip to a syndicate of papers . . . and I think I shall have something interesting to tell."<sup>13</sup>

He developed another wrinkle. Though in size the *Spray* was a thirtieth of "the little bark" the *Aquidneck*, the ex-merchantman felt once more ready for trade. "I shan't carry much cargo," he said, "but the *Spray* will be pretty well filled with curios of various kinds before she gets back."<sup>14</sup>

For the rest, grocers and other tradesmen in Boston stocked him with supplies, for the one thing Slocum lacked was money.<sup>15</sup> He put revolvers and rifles on board. He took only "the simplest of medicines and some disinfectants."<sup>16</sup> In the cabin were charts "for all over the world, a sextant, a compass, and chronometer,"<sup>17</sup> and the latest Massey patent (taffrail) log for measuring speed and distance.

Getting ready to go, Slocum was cheerful. He spoke nonchalantly to reporters who came down to the dock on the East Boston side of the harbor where the *Spray* was moored. ". . . after a talk with the captain and an examination of his boat something of his own confidence communicates itself to the inquirer, and the adventure does not seem so strange or so impossible of successful issue as many less promising ones which have had a happy termination."<sup>18</sup> Behind the anonymous newspaper accounts were all sorts of newspapermen, sympathetic, facetious, or slipshod, or writers of deathless prose.

A reporter asked the captain how he would handle the boat. "She is very easily managed, even in a breeze," Slocum replied, "and then, too, I have a steering gear which will act automatically when the boat is once laid on her course, and that will give me some chance to rest."<sup>19</sup>

What about sleep? Slocum answered that he was used

to going without sleep for two or three days at a time. Actually he had not only unusual muscular strength, but exceptional powers of resisting fatigue. Thirty hours at the wheel, in a storm, he found, did not overtax his "human endurance."<sup>20</sup> But his plan in ordinary weather was to "sleep in the day time and keep the boat going at night . . . When it blows too hard I shall get out my sea anchor, batten everything down tight, and go below for a sleep and let the gale blow itself out."<sup>21</sup>

To another reporter, Slocum said, "I don't go out like the dumb and blind. Understanding nautical astronomy, I will, of course, navigate the world around with some degree of precision natural to any first-rate navigator. But there is one thing new in my outfit, already tested, the workings of which you will hear of in my letters . . . It will be of great value at sea . . . Without it I could hardly dare to go on a voyage alone."<sup>22</sup> The captain said he reckoned it would be his last voyage. He said he hoped to make enough out of it to return home to his wife and four children, buy a little farm, and settle down.<sup>23</sup>

Action is the friend of beguiling illusion, and now that Slocum stood on the verge of departure, he could dream of wife and home. This is the dream of the wanderer and the homeless. The captain's home was not with Hettie, who may have loved him once, but scarcely understood him. She was no Virginia with flashing eyes and brilliant intuitions, the game companion on deck, the reading companion in the cabin. Hettie was doomed to disappoint, and to be disappointed. She was financially disappointed, certainly.<sup>24</sup> She had no roof she could call her own. On the one hand, there was the still young, and by now

bewildered, dressmaker. On the other, the sea-drawn escapist at a critical stage of life. She could not have been important to him, though he tried to consider her. Their incompatibility was deeply distressing, but it had its uses. It helped the captain preserve his independence for the peculiar purposes of his life.

Slocum told reporters he would sail alone "unless my wife changes her mind about staying ashore."<sup>25</sup> But he must have known very well that she was not going. He had asked her, and she had replied: "Joshua, I've had a v'yage."<sup>26</sup> She was thinking of the hardships of the trip in the *Liberdade* six years before, while the captain remembered the satisfactions that the small boat voyage had brought. Those days on the water had been happy days for him. Now it seemed that the only way to be carefree again was to go on another such voyage.

Captain Slocum, the ex-merchantman, and little-known author, was ready to put to sea. He described the route he proposed to follow. It bears little resemblance to the one he took. He said that he thought the voyage would last two years, thus underestimating the time by more than fifty per cent.

Then, almost at the very last minute, he was visited by a lady of literary tastes. She was Mabel Wagnalls, the unmarried, twenty-four-year-old daughter of Adam Wagnalls. Mabel was not an up-country girl. She had been raised with books, and music, and money. She spoke in a cultivated voice. Her air of high culture was fascinating to Slocum. She respected learning, and she wanted to write. The enterprise that the old knight of action was about to embark on touched her imagination and heart.

She took the captain a copy of her own first book, *Miserere*, "a musical story."<sup>27</sup> On her visiting card, which she pasted inside the volume, she wrote: "Wishing you a safe and successful return."<sup>28</sup> It was a very conventional phrase, yet understanding and affection can live in such simple words.

Captain Slocum had failed in the eyes of the world, and in Hettie's eyes; but not in Mabel's. The young lady said to the grizzled seafarer: "The Spray will come back."<sup>29</sup> There was, after all, balm in Gilead; and it was to this near-stranger that he turned, in dreaming, during the lonely years ahead.

*I had taken little advice  
from anyone . . .*

"To go Round the World," the *Boston Globe* announced. "Capt. Slocum Starts from East Boston Alone in His 40-Foot Spray."

Captain Slocum, "a kinky salt," 5 feet, 9½ inches tall, weighing 146 lbs., "spry as a kitten and nimble as a monkey,"<sup>1</sup> was fifty-one years old when he set sail, 24 April 1895. In a last-minute decision he had changed the *Spray's* hailing port from Fairhaven to Boston, because he thought that for going around the world the latter name would be better known. But he was wrong. Several times he was asked if Boston was near Fairhaven, or New Bedford. The whalers had carried the names of their ports to the ends of the earth, whereas Boston was a merchantman's port.<sup>2</sup>

"Where I shall next be heard from I cannot tell," he told a reporter. "I shall make right out to the southward, and when I get among the flying fish it will depend on how I feel how soon I leave them."

"'Courage still good?"

"Just as good as ever," was the hearty reply, as the captain cleared away everything forward and prepared to hoist the jib.

"'Good luck to you then . . .'

"'Aye, aye' was the cheery response, and the captain sprang aft to the wheel. As the whistles were sounding noon, he sailed away . . ."<sup>3</sup>

"I felt that there could be no turning back, and that I was engaging in an adventure the meaning of which I thoroughly understood," Slocum wrote later. As his boat, "passing fairylike silently down the bay," sailed by the wreck of a steamship broken in two over a ledge, he said aloud: "Take warning, *Spray*, and have a care."<sup>4</sup>

The dramatic exit notwithstanding, Slocum sailed not southward, but eastward, and only as far as Gloucester, twenty miles away. "Waves dancing joyously across Massachusetts Bay" met the *Spray* coming out of the harbor. "Every particle of water thrown into the air became a gem, and the *Spray*, bounding ahead, snatched necklace after necklace from the sea, and as often threw them away," wrote the poet-sailor.<sup>5</sup> He wanted to put into Gloucester to procure some fishermen's stores, he said, a fisherman's lantern, a gaff, and a dip-net. But in truth he needed "again to weigh the voyage, and my feelings, and all that."<sup>6</sup>

At Gloucester, the captain once more checked the boat over carefully, slapped two coats of antifouling paint on her bottom, and got an attack of malaria "from working at the Sloop on the beach there in a sickning ooze."<sup>7</sup>

The *Spray*, well advertised by the papers, attracted a crowd of the curious and friendly. The captain was given "many useful articles to add to his comfort while at sea . . . Messrs Wonson and Tarr gave him a supply of copper paint . . ."<sup>8</sup> A Boston lady sent the price of a large two-

burner lamp, which the captain thereupon purchased. He used it as a stove by day, as well as a lamp by night. Throughout the voyage the ladies brought gifts to the captain. There was a gallantry in his quest that was deeply appealing to women.

In Gloucester, Slocum found a castaway dory, cut it in two athwartships, and by boarding up the cut-off end made himself a boat to take along. Half a dory was about all one man could hoist, and all there was room for on deck. Slocum also used it for a laundry machine and a bathtub.

In return for these kindnesses, the captain spoke freely of his plans. He said he had hoped to have the sloop hauled across the Panamanian isthmus, but the railroad's agents had written that it couldn't be done. He was not fazed. He said he would continue down the South American coast instead, perhaps pick up an English-speaking companion at Pernambuco, if one could be found, and then go through the Strait of Magellan. He said he would then cross the Pacific to Japan; from there, go down through the South China Sea and across the Indian Ocean. Entering the Red Sea, he would proceed via the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean and Gibraltar. Finally, by crossing the Atlantic, he hoped to make Boston and home.<sup>9</sup>

He stayed in Gloucester two weeks, which was annoying to his syndicate. They were impatient for speedy action, but Slocum was never affected by considerations of speed. Leaving Gloucester in his own good time, he asked himself again "whether it were best to sail beyond the ledge and rocks at all." But he kept on, bound by the promise to himself. Still, he did not turn south, but continued



eastward, going home to Nova Scotia, as though even yet reluctant to say good-bye before pushing off to a destination unknown. From Brier Island, 13 May, he wrote friends at Roberts Brothers:

Fetches Westport Friday night. Experienced no difficulties in getting along alone; an no inconveniences I like the novelty of being "alone" even better than I anticipated. I find that I [have] friends, even here, at Westport—"The Island of Plenty" . . .

Will you please give me some hint of how much the first of my experience was disliked if the worst is known? . . .

I will as I get along, I think, make it interesting anyhow I shall try—But I have been put to my wit end to get started right

Do please be patient with me and you will find in the end that I shall try to be fully square . . .

Yours truly  
/s/ Josh Slocum

The start of the voyage, and of the writing, was painful. The first travel letters were rejected. Slocum was not feeling well. The course to be followed was still undecided, and the condition of the boat not yet quite satisfactory. But back home in Westport, where he had not been in thirty-five years, he began to feel better.

The "Spray"

WESTPORT N. S. May 21st 95

*Dear Mr. Hardy:*

. . . I am in a grand good place to repair my vessel and do it cheaply. Giving her a great going over!

Will sail on the next full tides (full moon)

... I think Pernambuco will be my first land-fall ...  
So many courses to be taken after that. I can only go as  
circumstances and my feelings dictate.

My mind is deffinately fixed on one thing and that  
is to go round, go with care and judgement and speak  
of what I see

Theres' not a reporter here to twist one, that I know  
of It is a haven of rest, but I shall do my work and sail  
as quickly as possible.

I guess it would bother my friends to proove that  
things don't happen on this voyage just as I relate  
them.

Thanking you Sir for your kind note ...

And, finally, from Yarmouth, 20 June, the captain  
wrote Roberts Brothers:

I arrived here yesterday with the Spray all in good  
order after having caulked her all óver and recruited  
myself ...

After all deliberations and careful study of rout and  
the seasons, I think my best way is via the Suez Canal,  
down the Read Sea and along the Coasts of India, in  
the winter months, calling at Aden and at Ceylon and  
Singapore taking the S. W. Monsoon next summer up  
the China Sea, calling at Hong Kong and other treaty  
ports in China thence to Japan and on to California  
From California I believe I shall cross the Isthmus of  
Panama The freight agent of the Panama road wrote  
me that I could not get over the isthmus—we'll see! ...

My health is excellent now. I experience no incon-  
venience in working the sloop alone and have not lost

a moment so far when sailing. My courage is better than it was and I am now at the edge of slipping off place.

... So I go east instead of west and roll around with the world ...

Slocum had put all the money he had raised into "absolute necessities" for the voyage. His old chronometer, long in disuse, needed cleaning and rating. It would cost \$15, which he did not have. So instead, at Yarmouth, he bought a \$1.50 tin clock, but because the face was smashed, he got it for \$1. It was his only time-piece throughout the voyage. Also at Yarmouth, he took aboard butter, a barrel of potatoes, and six barrels of water.

Sailing 2 July, the captain let go his hold on America, at last. All was left behind. The "boisterous Atlantic" was before him. He wrote later that during those first days out, "a feeling of awe crept over me. My memory worked with startling power. The ominous, the insignificant, the great, the small, the wonderful, the commonplace—all appeared . . ." <sup>10</sup> He heard the voices of the past. He could speak of Virginia to the moon.

From his quarterdeck, the ex-merchant captain called out orders, then went forward and obeyed them himself. At sheets and wheel, he sang the work songs of the merchant service as he had known it—"Reuben Ranzo," "Johnny Boker," and "We'll Pay Darby Doyle for His Boots"—for he did not accept the age of steel and steam, the impersonal, the non-singing age.

But the sound of his own voice made him lonely, too, except "when the gale was high and I found much work

to do. When fine weather returned, then came the sense of solitude, which I could not shake off."<sup>11</sup>

Slocum sailed thus eighteen days. When next heard from he had reached the Azores.

"SPRAY," HORTA FAYAL  
23rd July '95

*Dear Mr. Hardy:* I have been trying to scribble a few lines for the newspapers, but find it almost impossible to do or to think The Spray is constantly crowded with these good Islanders.

But I do hope the editor will make out something of what I send along. I will send in some other letter more detale of the voyage.

The only surprise to me has been the contented state of my mind and my perfectly good health. Hope my friends are as well—

I sail for Gibraltar tomorrow. This is the way to go round the globe: roll round with it!

Very Sincerely  
/s/ Joshua Slocum

At the Western Islands, Slocum was loaded with gifts. "Islanders are always the kindest people in the world," he wrote later, "and I met none anywhere kinder than the good hearts of this place . . . A damsel, as innocent as an angel, came alongside one day, and said she would embark on the *Spray* if I would land her at Lisbon. She could cook flying-fish, she thought . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Slocum lived high while at the Azores, and for a very short time thereafter. Getting under way again, and still his own cook, he made a meal of a Pico white cheese and

plums. By evening he was doubled up with cramps. While sailing, he had spent many hours reading Washington Irving's *Life of Columbus*. Now, lying ill and delirious on the cabin floor, with the wind and sea rising and the *Spray* racing on, Slocum saw standing at the wheel of the *Spray* the ghost of the pilot of the *Pinta*. Throughout the rest of his life, Slocum felt close to Columbus who, like himself, had been past fifty when he finally embarked on his great adventure. Despite all differences, both admiral and captain expressed themselves in action of a conquering kind. But sailing the seas, Slocum thought he was the happier man of the two.<sup>13</sup>

The ghost pilot guided the *Spray* for forty-eight hours, when Slocum awoke, weak but refreshed, got up, and "by inspiration . . . threw overboard all the plums in the vessel."<sup>14</sup>

On 4 August, the captain arrived at Gibraltar. On the 21st, the *Boston Globe* reported to those at home: "Slocum Safe . . . The run to Gibraltar was . . . distinguished by a spell of bad weather . . ." At the stronghold, the *Spray* was given a berth in the midst of battleships. British sailors were sent to repair her rigging, fresh milk and vegetables from the admiralty gardens to replenish her larder. The captain went picnicking with the governor, sight-seeing with the general. From the start, Slocum was a hero to the British. All about Gibraltar, he felt "the friendly grasp of a manly hand . . ." Apparently his only troubles were financial. He had made the land with \$1.50 in his pocket, but he patched up that weak spot with a \$50 loan from the treasurer\* and captain of the port.<sup>15</sup> A year later, Hettie, acting on instructions, repaid it.<sup>16</sup>

Part of the fiscal trouble was Slocum's failure to suit the taste of the editor of the *Boston Globe*, the backbone of the syndicate. The *Globe* seems to have published only three of his travel letters.<sup>17</sup> His unhurried and idiosyncratic writing made him wrong for the newspapers of his day.

To the first piece, the *Globe* gave the heading, "Spook on Spray. Ghost of Columbus' Man Steered the Boat. So Capt Slocum Thought After Eating Plums and Cheese. But the Sloop Reached Gibraltar Safely. Just 32 Days It Took the Yankee Skipper. With Frolic Welcome the Brave Tar Greeted the Tempests."

Slocum stayed at Gibraltar three weeks, and from there sent the second of his published travel letters. It was not very good. In an otherwise unoriginal report on the Rock, he tells how near the end of his visit he was guest of a party of naval officers on board a torpedo boat. The talk turned to Slocum's countryman and contemporary, Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783*, was having a tremendous effect on the naval mind.

"Capt Mahan's great book was praised . . . One of the officers, a wag, I suspected, incidentally remarked that the representative present, from over the sea, looked like Capt Mahan. Acknowledging the compliment I simply said that 'I could stand it if Mahan could.'"

"What else could I say?"

"The truth is, I think that I favor more our fellow-citizen Bill Nye; with a secret fear that neither Mr. Nye nor myself would be taken for handsome—in broad day."\*

\* Edgar Watson Nye (1850-96), better known as Bill Nye, born in

When Slocum was ready to leave Gibraltar, much to his surprise the British advised strongly against proceeding as he had planned, that is through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea. The reason: pirates. And under the very nose of Her Majesty's Navy! That meant the captain would, after all, have to go west instead of continuing east. It meant his cruise across the Atlantic had been a wild-goose chase. And it meant he would have to recross the ocean. So that is what Slocum, nothing daunted, did.

His third published travel letter tells of events after leaving Gibraltar. The captain sailed 26 August, heading southwestward, following Magellan's course, but off the coast of Morocco he was spotted by Moorish pirates. The pirates gave chase. The captain raced ahead, carrying all possible sail. Day was ending, and a higher sea rolling up fast; conditions, Slocum thought, which favored the *Spray*—until a strong squall snapped her main boom.

"Here was I crippled in an instant and a craft coming down on me. I didn't like it a bit," read the travel letter.

"I sprang instantly to the work of getting the broken boom on board and of securing the sail. This I managed, I hardly know how, but I recall that it was done quickly. And the sail was not torn—a wonder!

"My presence of mind was good, and the machinery of the head, such as it is, was working fast. I would have

Maine and reared in the frontier country, had a reputation for his humorous writings, which were of the loud and obvious type popular at the time. In 1895, he was writing for the *New York World*, the very thing Slocum was ambitious of doing.

a hail now in a moment more with the offer of help, maybe, as a beginning.

"It was the work of an instant to snatch rifle and revolvers up from the cabin and be in readiness to discourage the plan. I was bound to do without assistance so long as I had a shot left and strength to fire it!

"When the boom broke my heart quailed, but now I was serene. Having time to look around now, I saw the most gratifying change in the aspect of affairs.

"The felucca—devil take him!—was dismayed outright. I felt almost a disappointment.

"It took me, probably, a matter of two hours, in the rough sea, to mend the boom.

"The contrivance was simple enough, two bunk boards, two oars and a capstan bar lashed firmly over the broken part . . .

"The quickest work at sea is always the best work."

Fifteen days out of Gibraltar, the *Spray* fell in with the tradewinds. They were too good to lose, so Slocum made no calls. He sailed on, making first-rate time, and then struck the doldrums. For ten days thereafter, the *Spray* averaged only thirty miles a day. "The doldrums, I suppose you know," the captain explained to *Globe* readers, "are the baffling winds, light air, and heavy rain squalls from all directions in the belt between the NE and the SE trades . . .

"I was greatly disappointed in the thunder and lightning in the doldrums this time crossing. I saw only one pale flash and heard but the one most distant rumble. I must confess that I love to hear it crash and shake the air all around. I do, indeed. I can give no reason for the strange



fascination, except that when a boy my life was a burden of fear from the same mighty forces.

"Being taught to believe that lightning was to kill bad people generally, and bad boys in particular, I naturally did some trembling in those grand thunder storms that passed over the old farm."

From Gibraltar, Slocum was forty days and nights at sea. All alone, he saw ships passing, and schools of fish playing. The latter seemed friendly. As for the former, the "time was when ships passing one another . . . backed their topsails and had a 'gam,' and on parting fired guns; but those good old days have gone. People have hardly time nowadays to speak even on the broad ocean . . . There are no poetry-enshrined freighters on the sea now; it is a prosy life when we have no time to bid one another good morning."<sup>18</sup>

It was 5 October when the *Spray* dropped anchor in Pernambuco harbor. Slocum had crossed the Atlantic twice, and was now half-way between Boston and the Horn. He had been away almost six months. Sailor-like, he was not surprised to find himself still among friends. Indeed, he knew the ports of Brazil far better than he ever let on in his writing.

Three days after arrival, he posted the travel letter quoted above, and with it, this personal one to Eugene Hardy:

. . . I am not surprised that a letter of mine turned out bad, but Mr T\_\_\_\_\_ \* agreed on \$20 per col for

\* Charles Henry Taylor (1846-1921), born in Boston, became manager of the *Globe* in the panic year of 1873. He was an enterprising journalist, whose many innovations made newspaper history. He cut the price of his paper to two cents, and built up huge circulation figures.

the availables not as a literary production—the high price—but to encourage the enterprise as I understood it . . . \$5 per col or even less according to number of papers would be all right . . .

The Sun printed trash of mine freely enough on more than one occasion when it came for nothing and I suspect that a case of murder or rape would find space for all the particulars, in all of the papers

But I cant go to war with them!

I shall get through! I lived awful hard coming down. But dont say anything about it

I could have better the condition but I wouldn't call for fruit or vegetables at the islands. I was eager to get forward I had plenty hard bread coffee & tea and butter

I send one more letter I dare not look it over If it is not interesting I can not be interesting stirred up from the bottom of my soul

It was the voyage I thought and not me. No sailor has ever done what I have done.

The *Spray*, having crossed the Atlantic twice, was in need of refitting, and at Pernambuco, Slocum made the first of a number of changes to her rig. He shortened the main boom inboard four feet, by removing the piece broken off in the flight from the pirates, and refitting the jaws. But that was all, for he was eager to push on to Rio to see to some unfinished business. He wanted to inquire about the wages due him, now two years in arrears, for taking the *Destroyer* from New York to Brazil. On 5 November, he arrived at Rio, having sailed the 1,200 miles in twelve days. He called for his mail, then promptly wrote Hardy again:

. . . I hav'nt, since the last news from Boston, felt like trying to write for a paper I thought there was something in young C\_\_\_\_\_ Taylor\* but I find he is only a rich mans son after all.

I will not give your house any more surprises of the money order kind. It was kind to advance the \$20. I appreciate that and the books, which I sold as I went along, and by them kept afloat. I am doing better now and will be doing still better as I go along Treasure Island is ahead! . . .

I am in the very best of health and living in great hope . . .

*... now like a bird on the crest of a  
wave, and now like a waif deep  
down in the hollow ...*

IF THE captain's great hopes never wore out completely, certain smaller ones soon were dissolved. Whereas it had been "the legal government" of Brazil which, in 1893, had engaged his services, since then the wheel of political fortune had brought changes. Admiral de Mello's men, "the so-called rebels," were now in power, and, as Slocum put it, they felt under less obligation to him than he could have wished.

Nevertheless, while in Rio, he called on government officials, seeking the wages due in the matter of the "be-loved Destroyer." All he got, however, was the offer of the ship herself with her smoke-stack awash in Bahia. He declined with thanks.

On 28 November, Slocum sailed from Rio, keeping on to the southward. Along the coast of Uruguay, the *Spray* went aground. Slocum tried to kedge her off, using his razeed dory, but the dory upset and he nearly drowned. Remember that he could not swim. "Three times I had been under water, in trying to right the dory, and I was just saying 'Now I lay me,' when I was seized by a determination to try yet once more, so that no one of the

prophets of evil I had left behind me could say, 'I told you so.' Whatever the danger may have been, much or little, I can truly say that the moment was the most serene of my life."<sup>1</sup>

With help from friendly ranchers of the Uruguayan campo, the *Spray* was soon floated again, and the captain went on his way to Montevideo. There, he received a rousing steam-whistle welcome. The *Spray* was docked and overhauled free of charge by the Royal Mail Steamship Company. Slocum was given twenty pounds of sterling and "a wonderful makeshift stove" for the cold, wet weather ahead. Again he found an old friend, a Captain Howard of Cape Cod. The two captains made "an excursion" to Buenos Aires, dining together on New England style fish chowder while the *Spray* demonstrated her self-steering qualities. They sailed up the Plata River, past the outer roads where, eleven years before, the *Aquidneck*, with Virginia on board, had anchored, and where the boy, B. Aymar, had hoisted the flag letter "J." If the familiar scenes stirred memories, or made Slocum's old wounds burn, the old sailor does not say. Never a word concerning all that had happened to him there. "I had not been in Buenos Aires for a number of years," he wrote.<sup>2</sup> That is all. Was the excursion really a pilgrimage to Virginia's grave? Was the lettering still golden on her tombstone? Did the captain see a connection between her death and the voyage he was now embarked on?

At Buenos Aires, Slocum again unshipped the sloop's mast and shortened it seven feet. He also reduced the length of the bowsprit five feet, but more than once, when called on to reef the jib, regretted he had not shortened it further.

Leaving Buenos Aires, 26 January 1896, Slocum sailed down the Plata alone to get on with the voyage. "I will not say that I expected all fine sailing on the course for Cape Horn direct," he wrote later, "but while I worked at the sails and rigging I thought only of onward and forward. It was when I anchored in the lonely places that a feeling of awe crept over me. At the last anchorage on the monotonous and muddy river, weak as it may seem, I gave way to my feelings."<sup>3</sup> He never saw Virginia's grave again.

Continuing down the coast of Patagonia, Slocum had another hair-breadth escape. One day, while the sloop under short sail was making her way through a storm, a tremendous wave, the culmination of many, came roaring down upon her. The captain just had time to drop sails and get himself up on the peak halyards, when the mountain of water, mast-head high, broke over the vessel. "It may have been a minute that from my hold in the rigging I could see no part of the *Spray's* hull," he wrote. "Perhaps it was even less time than that, but it seemed a long while, for under great excitement one lives fast . . . Not only did the past, with electric speed, flash before me, but I had time while in my hazardous position for resolutions for the future that would take a long time to fulfil."<sup>4</sup> One thinks how often even the best of yachtsmen fall off their yachts. And they are seldom alone, or sailing off the Patagonian coast.

Early in February, 1896, the *Spray* reached and rounded Cape Virgins, the eastern entrance of the Strait of Magellan. It was the most favorable time of year, but she immediately encountered fierce currents and sudden

squalls. "I reefed the sloop's sails," Slocum wrote, "and sitting in the cabin to rest my eyes, I was so strongly impressed with what in all nature I might expect that as I dozed the very air I breathed seemed to warn me of danger. My senses heard '*Spray* ahoy!' shouted in warning. I sprang to the deck wondering who could be there that knew the *Spray* so well as to call out her name passing in the dark; for it was now the blackest of nights all around, except away in the southwest where rose the old familiar white arch, the terror of Cape Horn, rapidly pushed up by a southwest gale. I had only a moment to douse sail and lash all solid when it struck . . . For thirty hours it kept on blowing hard . . ."<sup>5</sup>

On 14 February, Slocum anchored at Sandy Point, a Chilean coaling station, where the 2,000 inhabitants in that "dreary land seemed not the worst off in the world." There he was advised to ship hands to fight Indians farther west in the Strait, but no one seemed to care to join his expedition. Slocum dropped the idea and instead loaded his guns. But just then along came Captain Pedro Samblich, "a good Austrian of large experience." He gave his fellow-mariner a bag of carpet tacks. "You must use them with discretion," said Samblich to Slocum, "that is to say, don't step on them yourself."<sup>6</sup> With this narrow hint to the use of the tacks, Slocum found the way to keep his deck clear of intruders at night.

On 19 February, Slocum cleared Sandy Point. He had his first encounter with the terrible squalls called williwaws. "They were compressed gales of wind that Boreas handed down over the hills in chunks." The next day, his fifty-second birthday, he was alone "with hardly so

much as a bird in sight, off Cape Froward, the southernmost point of the continent of America.”<sup>7</sup>

Days of beating against wind-storms and currents followed. But fair weather brought no rest. Presently Slocum was chased by canoes manned by savages. He did not think it advisable to let on that he was alone, but stepped into the cabin, crawled through the hold, and then came out the forward hatch, having changed his clothes on the way. “That made two men,” he wrote. Next, he took the piece of bowsprit he had sawed off at Buenos Aires, and which he still had on board—he was not the man to throw good stuff away—and dressed it as a seaman. He arranged it forward and attached a line by means of which he could make it move. “That made three of us . . . but for all that the savages came on faster than before.”<sup>8</sup> Two shots, however, fired across their bows, sent them hurrying back to shore.

Slocum found and ate excellent mussels in the Strait, but he would not try for a duck. In “the loneliness of life about the dreary country I found myself in no mood to make one life less . . .” In fact, throughout the entire voyage, he fired only at sharks and men.

For ten days more Slocum sailed westward, taking the Magellan weather as it came, flogging against current and wind, anchoring and weighing many times. At last he reached Port Tamar. Cape Pilar, the western entrance, was now in sight. “Here I felt the throb of the great ocean that lay before me. I knew now I had put a world behind me, and that I was opening out another world ahead.”<sup>9</sup>

On 3 March, the captain sailed from Port Tamar for Cape Pilar. The wind was from the northeast and he hoped it would hold until he was clear of the land. But



the *Spray* had hardly plunged into the Pacific, when the wind hauled northwest and blew a very hard gale. It was the kind of wind which four hundred years before had driven Drake south to discover Cape Horn. Slocum could not hold to his westward course. The *Spray*, her sails blown to ribbons, ran before the wind. Under bare poles she headed southeast as though she would round the Horn and carry the captain back into the Atlantic. The waves "rose and fell and bellowed their never-ending story of the sea; but the Hand that held these held also the *Spray*." If Slocum lived by miracles, he did not count on them. He tried to hold the *Spray*, too. He paid out two long sea ropes to steady his craft and break the combing seas astern. He lashed her helm amidship. But even "while the storm raged at its worst," he found his ship "wholesome and noble. My mind as to her seaworthiness was put to ease for aye."<sup>10</sup>

On the fourth day of the gale, Slocum believed he was nearing the point of Cape Horn. Through a rift in the clouds he saw a mountain which he took for the Cape. That decided him to go to the Falkland Islands to refit. He headed east. Actually, however, he was still a hundred miles north of the Cape, and instead of rounding it, was fetching in towards the Cockburn Channel, one of the many arms of the Strait. "Night closed in before the sloop reached land, leaving her feeling the way in the pitchy darkness," he wrote. "I saw breakers ahead before long. At this I wore ship and stood offshore, but was immediately startled by the tremendous roaring of breakers again ahead and on the lee bow. This puzzled me for there should have been no broken water where I supposed myself to be . . . In this way, among dangers, I spent the

rest of the night. Hail and sleet in the fierce squalls cut my flesh till the blood trickled over my face, but what of that? It was daylight, and the sloop was in the midst of the Milky Way of the sea . . . and it was the white breakers of a huge sea over sunken rocks which had threatened to engulf her through the night. It was Fury Island I had sighted and steered for . . . God knows how my vessel escaped.”<sup>11</sup>

Darwin described these waters at the time of his voyage on the *Beagle* some fifty years before Slocum's. In the intervening period that dim region had not changed. “Our course,” Darwin wrote, “lay south down that gloomy passage which I have already alluded to as belonging to another and a worse world . . . Sir J. Narborough called one part South Desolation, because it is ‘so desolate a land to behold’; and well indeed might he say so. Outside the main islands, there are numberless scattered rocks on which the long swell of the ocean incessantly rages. We passed out between the East and West Furies; and a little further northward there are so many breakers that the sea is called the Milky Way. One sight of such a coast is enough to make a landsman dream for a week about shipwrecks, peril, and death . . .”<sup>12</sup>

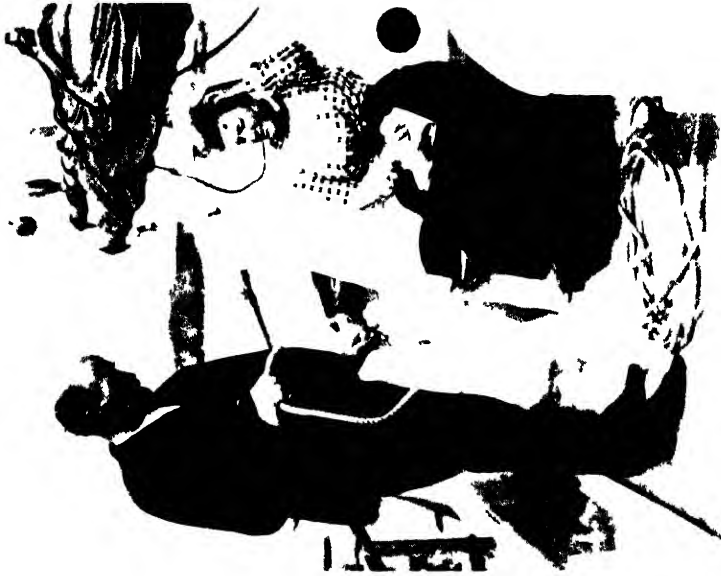
In order to make his way into the Strait again, Slocum had now to sail alone around the wildest part of Tierra del Fuego. And he had to rely on his own refitting. He mended his mainsail with palm and needle, and added pieces to it as he went along. When finally he was able to re-enter near Cape Froward, a point he had passed weeks before, he had been carried half way back to the Atlantic.

Once again the captain turned the *Spray's* prow westward. For a second time he prepared to sail the second half of the Strait. On this passage the carpet tacks came in handy. Passing Thieves Bay, he sprinkled them on deck at night. Then, when stealthily boarded by barefoot Fuegian savages, he chalked up a carpet-tack victory. His prize was the sight of the Fuegians diving overboard, screaming.

Some days later, west of Borgia Bay,\* when all Indian settlements had been left behind, the captain ran into some rare good luck. He discovered and salvaged wreckage goods, many casks of tallow, and a barrel of wine. He worked all day in rain and snow loading the *Spray* till the vessel was tallowed from keelson to truck. The tallow was stowed in the cabin as well as on deck, and all was well smeared, but the captain "was happy in the prospect of doing a good business farther along on the voyage, for the habits of an old trader would come to the surface."<sup>18</sup>

Some years later, when Slocum was home, in telling a friend of the voyage, he said: "When I was rounding the southern point of Patagonia we [sic] had severe cold weather and I felt the need of fatter food than I'd been having. Luckily about that time I secured some barrels of very fine tallow . . . and I began to fry buns and doughnuts in that tallow. Here's one of my buns on the mantel

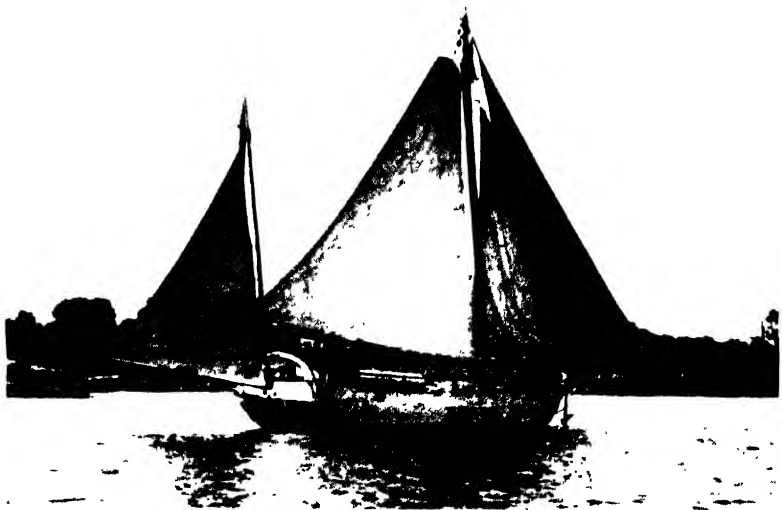
\* A latter-day sailor, Felix Riesenbergl, wrote: "Passing Big Borgia, or Despair Island, we were looking on the unspoiled world of steep mountains, icy crags, and terrifying rocks that first met the eyes of Magellan . . . I came upon a small indentation, the famous spot where ships for long had been in the habit of leaving visiting cards, boards on which were painted their names and the dates of their anchoring. Among the lot, many rotting away, was the name of Captain Slocum's brave little *Spray*."

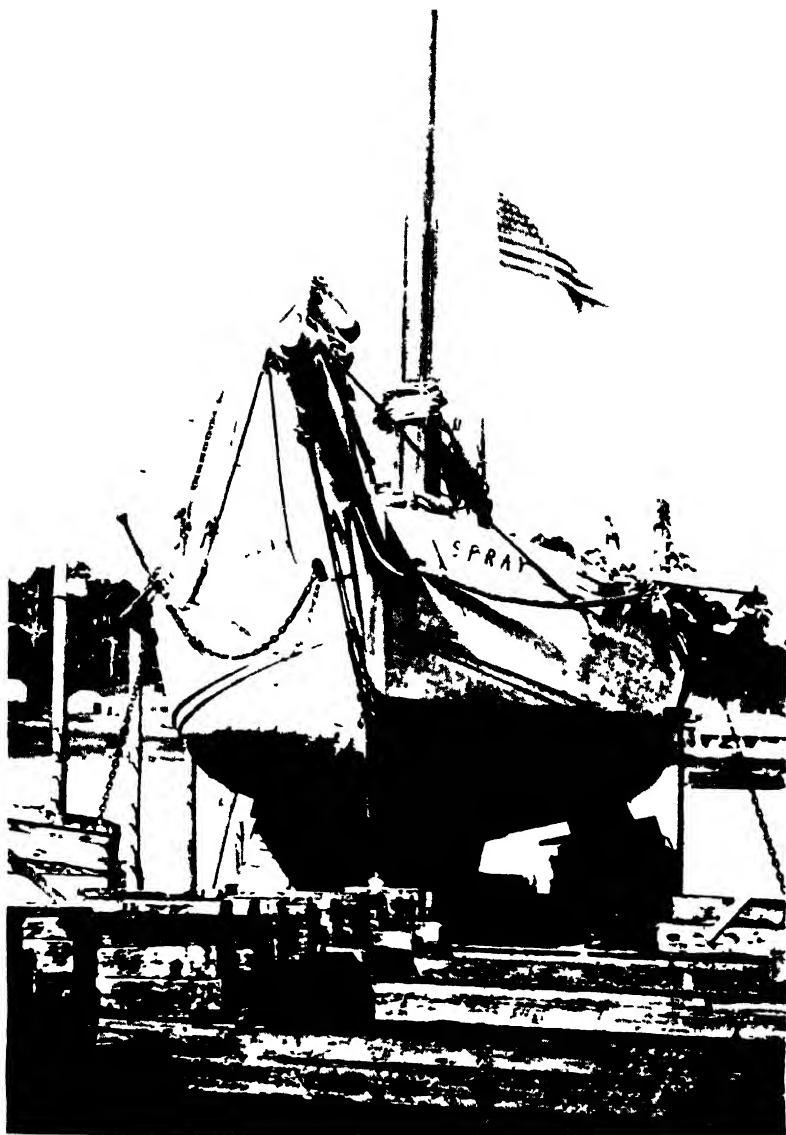


Left Virginia Albertina Walker Slocum the Captain's first wife Right The Captain and Hettie aboard the *Spruce Marthas Vineyard*, 1902 *Photograph by Clifton Johnson*

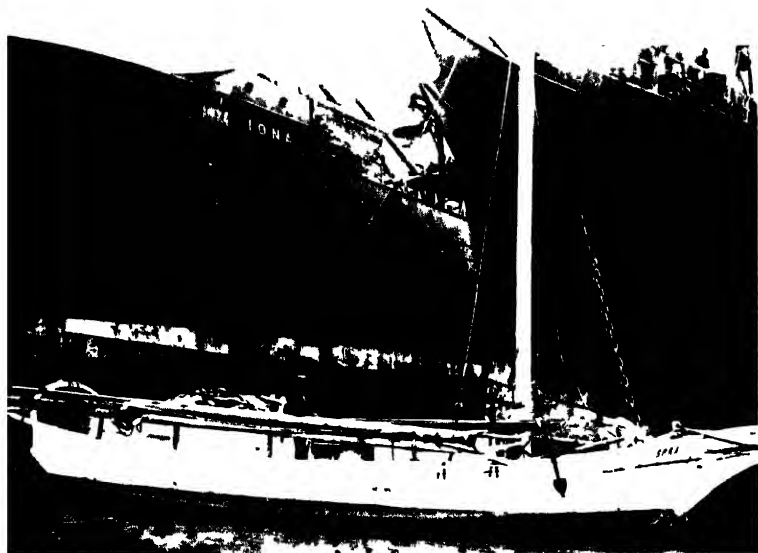


Above: The *Liberdade* at Washington, D.C., 1888-89. Photograph from the Smithsonian Institution. Below: The *Spray* anchored at Branford Harbour about 1907. Photograph by N. B. Brainard





Hauled out at Devonport, Tasmania, March 1897  
*Photograph by W. Aikenhead*



Above In a South American port, 1895 *Sent by B Aymar Slocum* Below The Captain and Hettie at West Tisbury, Massachusetts, 1902 *Photograph by Clifton Johnson*

now. It looks and feels just like a rock, doesn't it? I must put it in a safer place. Some burglar will be breaking in here after jewelry and take this. It's the last specimen I have and I wouldn't want to lose it."<sup>14</sup>

But at last, on 13 April, more than two months after first entering the Strait, the *Spray* cleared the tide-race off Cape Pilar, and the Evangelistas, and was once again in the open Pacific. By the following morning only the highest mountains could still be seen by the captain. Making good headway on a northwest course, he soon sank them out of sight. "Hurrah for the Spray!" he shouted to the sky, and the seals, and the sea-gulls, and penguins.<sup>15</sup>

In hundreds of years, many passages have been made through the Strait of Magellan. But, as W. S. Barclay, the English geographer, pointed out, three among them all will not be forgotten. The first is that of the discoverer. The second, Sir Francis Drake's. Without charts, he sailed through from end to end in sixteen days. The third is that of Captain Slocum. His, "in point of pure seamanship," has been called the most remarkable of all.<sup>16</sup> All alone, he both navigated and sailed. At the western entrance, he single-handed survived a Cape Horn equinoctial gale. He passed an entire night cruising and tacking in one of the worst death traps of the Seven Seas. Finding his own way to re-enter the Strait, he sailed again to Cape Pilar, thus circumnavigating the worst triangle that any mariner could ask for.

The single-handers who came after Slocum took other routes, and, since 1915, have gone through the Panama Canal. His epic of the Horn region has not been repeated. It is not likely that it will be.



*Then was the time to uncover my head, for I sailed alone with God.*

SLOCUM WAS alone on the unbroken ocean. Cold storms and hazardous rocks were behind him. Summer was ahead. Shaking out a reef now, and setting the whole jib, he pressed on hopefully for Robinson Crusoe's island.

A "fair weather seas" which washed over the sloop and the captain, also washed away old regrets. ". . . roaring seas had turned to gossiping waves that rippled and pattered against her sides as she rolled among them, delighted with their story." Fifteen days out from Cape Pilar, he made Juan Fernandez, right ahead.

It was some sixty years earlier that Dana, aboard the brig *Pilgrim*, had rounded the Horn and made for the same historic island. ". . . at daylight," he wrote, "we saw the Island of Juan Fernandez directly ahead, rising like a deep blue cloud out of the sea. We were then probably nearly seventy miles from it . . . I shall never forget the peculiar sensation which I experienced on finding myself once more surrounded by land, feeling the night breeze coming from off shore and hearing the frogs and crickets."<sup>1</sup>

Slocum, after navigating alone in his smaller and less lofty vessel, wrote: "The blue hills of Juan Fernandez,

high among the clouds, could be seen about thirty miles off. A thousand emotions thrilled me when I saw the island, and I bowed my head to the deck. We may mock the Oriental salaam, but for my part I could find no other way of expressing myself.”<sup>2</sup>

If a parallel can be found in the literature of the sea to Slocum’s response to Juan Fernandez, his first encounter with the islanders is unique. The courtly captain welcomed them on board with coffee and doughnuts. The taste of the fat on the latter created a sensation. In the diet of the islanders, there was no food fatter than goat, and a goat is, at best, a lean creature. By evening of the first day, Slocum had taught the inhabitants how to fry doughnuts and buns. “They were so benighted,” he said later, “they’d never seen a doughnut in their lives.”<sup>3</sup> Then he sold his tallow as fast as he could weigh it out. “I did not charge a high price . . .” he wrote, “but the ancient and curious coins I got in payment . . . I sold afterwards to antiquarians for more than face-value. In this way I made a reasonable profit. I brought away money of all denominations . . . and nearly all there was, so far as I could find out.”<sup>4</sup>

Slocum found Juan Fernandez a lovely spot. He stayed ten days. There was nothing to hurry for, and besides, he never was in a hurry. One of the pleasantest days of the whole trip, he thought, was spent with the children of the place, gathering wild fruit for the long voyage across the Pacific. “I got some nice quinces on Robinson Crusoe’s island, and when I left I put them into preserves as I sailed along,” the combination captain, cook, and crew explained later.<sup>5</sup> He walked to the top of the mountain

where Alexander Selkirk had had his lookout, and he wondered why the Englishman had ever left the "blessed island."

While there, Slocum feasted on many things, but nothing was sweeter to him than the sight of the home, and the very cave, where Selkirk, Robinson Crusoe's prototype, had lived. The affinity between the fictional Robinson and the actual Joshua intrigued him. At times, the histories of both seem equally unreal.

He left Juan Fernandez on 5 May. Bearing away to the north, he passed the island of St. Felix, and then suddenly picked up the trade winds. They blew hard and the *Spray*, under reefs, sped westward "with a bone in her mouth."\* Day after day Slocum sailed, and marked his position on his chart, more by intuition, he thought, than by calculation. For a whole month, the *Spray* held her course, and in all that time she carried no light. "The sun every morning came up astern; every evening it went down ahead. I wished for no other compass to guide me," he wrote, "for these were true. If I doubted my reckoning after a long time at sea I verified it by reading the clock aloft made by the Great Architect, and it was right."<sup>6</sup>

Slocum did not, of course, stand all that time at the helm. To do so would have been impossible. Instead, he sat below reading—his books were always his friends, he said—or mending his clothes. Or he would cook his meals, and eat them "in peace." He did not smoke, and though not a teetotaler, drank very little.<sup>7</sup>

On the forty-third day out from Juan Fernandez, the

\* When the forward motion of a vessel creates white foam at her bows, she is said to be sailing with a bone in her mouth.

solo navigator sighted Nukahiva, the lofty southernmost island of the Marquesas, but even after that long time at sea, he did not haul in for a landing. The days had been going so pleasantly that he decided to press on for Samoa where he wished to make a personal call. He wanted to pay his respects to the widow of one of his favorite authors.

"My diet on those long passages," he wrote in *Sailing Alone*, "usually consisted of potatoes and salt cod and biscuits, which I made two or three times a week. I had always plenty of coffee, tea, sugar, and flour." But some years later, when discussing the question of how he managed his meals, he gave a more detailed account. "There is great chance for missionary work in cooking," he told an admiring caller who was also a Massachusetts man and may have understood the righteousness of New England dishes. All the ports and countries the ex-merchant captain had visited had influenced his tastes not at all. He steadfastly rejected all interests not really his, all the fads and fashions one catches from others. Wherever he sailed, he took himself with him.

"When I started on the voyage . . ." he said, "I laid in two barrels of ship's bread, or pilot bread, as some call it. In appearance this bread is like a large thick cracker of rather coarse quality. There's no nonsense about it, though. It was made for keeps. It isn't fine and white like the crackers most people like to buy. You could eat a bushel basket full of those and get no substance. But this old-fashioned hard bread is a kind of whole wheat . . . My two barrels full lasted me the voyage through. I put them up in tin cans while they were dry and crisp, and

I sealed the cans with solder so the bread was as good three years old as it was new.

"I used to soak my hardtack and make bread pudding of the very nicest kind and it had strength and nourishment, too. It was something that would stand by you. I soaked the bread about six hours to get it thoroughly soft, then added sugar, butter, milk and raisins, put it on my lamp-stove and in a few minutes it was done.

"My stores included . . . baking powder, salt, pepper and mustard—yes, and curry, I mustn't forget that. Curry powder is great stuff aboard a vessel. It was just what I needed to give the final touch to my venison stews that I made out of the salt beef and salt pork I carried along. Besides those meats I had ham and dried codfish. The fish wasn't any of those little tom cods, skinned and bleached and tasteless, that most people fancy, but big fellows, thick as a board and broad as a side of sole leather. Very few persons know how to treat a salt codfish properly. To freshen it they let it stand in water half a day or more, very likely, and it may be, use several waters. That takes all the goodness out. You can get rid of the extra salt just as effectively and without hurting the fish by picking it to pieces and washing it with your hands—just shaking it up and down in the water. Then put it right into the pot and boil for fifteen minutes. When you get it ready for the table, add butter and pepper and chop a hard-boiled egg and put on top. You take codfish cooked that way and I want to set down prepared to hoist in a meal of it; and all I want besides is potatoes, coffee, and bread and butter."<sup>8</sup>

Slocum did not bother to fish on the voyage. But in

addition to the Boston salt cod, he did have fresh fish anyway. In the tropical waters where he sailed most of the time, there were fish that came aboard on their own.

"Ah! such breakfasts as I used to have," he recalled when back in New England. "Often I'd get up in the morning and find a dozen . . . flying fish on the deck, and sometimes they'd get down the foreescuttle right alongside the frying pan."<sup>9</sup>

He explained how he made his soda bread, and the biscuits he was so fond of. And when it was time for a mug up, he knew just how he wanted his coffee. "I ground my own coffee . . . that's the only way to have it good. Ground coffee isn't worth as much by a great deal if you've let it stand for a day. Add your hot water and serve at once. You mustn't boil it."

The milk the captain used was condensed but unsweetened. He called it "evaporated cream." When he laid in a supply of butter, he would fill all his "tumblers and mugs with it, spread a thin layer of salt on top and then tie a bit of muslin over that." The butter would then be placed in what he called a strong pickle. "Butter + brine like that," the captain said, "will keep as long as you want." As for eggs, the captain said he had more of them than one would imagine. He kept them by immersing them in hot water for a minute. "That hermetically sealed the pores," he explained, "and they would be all right for a good many weeks, even in a very hot climate."

Best of all were the potatoes, that "highly prized sailors' luxury." Yankee that he was, one pictures Slocum eating them three times a day. "My potatoes were usually delicious," he said. "I never got up those frothy varieties

they call 'creamed potatoes.' No, sir, I advocate cooking the potatoes and bringing them to the table with their jackets on, unless they throw them off themselves in the process of cooking. That's the natural way, and that's the only way to get their full virtues."<sup>10</sup>

On 16 July, at noon, Slocum dropped anchor at Apia, in the kingdom of Samoa. Now he had been seventy-three days at sea alone without making port. But even after that extremely long time he did not go ashore at once. Instead he spread an awning and sat in its shade, listening to the voices of Samoan men and women, to the musical tones drifting to him across the harbor.

Presently, three young women paddled a canoe alongside. "Talofa lee (Love to you, chief)," they hailed, and looked at the Yankee's flag.

"Schoon come Melike?" one of the sweet crew inquired.

The captain of the *Spray* returned the greeting, Love to you, before replying, yes.

There was a further exchange of courtesies. Why had he come that long distance? "To hear you ladies sing," said the knight-errant from New England.

Then, wrote Slocum, they all cried, "Oh, talofa lee!" and sang on. "Their voices filled the air with music that rolled across to the grove of tall palms on the other side of the harbor and back."<sup>11</sup>

Fanny Stevenson came down next day to greet the captain who had sailed in her honor so many weeks alone. She invited him to Vailima, the Stevensons' struggling tropical plantation. When he arrived he was asked to sit at the desk of the writer he had lately been reading, but he could not bring himself to do it. Before he left, Mrs.

Stevenson gave him four volumes of sailing directories which, she said, had been read many times by Robert Louis. She inscribed them "to the sort of seafaring man that he [R. L. S.] liked above all others."<sup>12</sup>

Fanny Stevenson had the spirit of a frontier wife, and Slocum admired her; for two reasons especially. First, she had shared many voyages with her husband in small boats among the Pacific islands. When she spoke with the captain of the similarity of tastes between herself and her husband, and how much that had meant, Slocum knew what she was talking about. Second, he cherished that "bright woman," because she did not ask if the voyage would pay. Her "kindly eyes" were full of understanding as she listened to him.

In fact, Slocum noted that the further he sailed from "the center of civilization" (did he mean Boston?), the less he heard of "what would and would not pay." If the captain was a trader—and he was—he was also a poet-philosophizer who could delight in a Samoan chief who said: "Dollar, dollar, white man know only dollar . . . On the tree there is fruit. Let the days go by; why should we mourn over that? There are millions of days coming. The breadfruit is yellow in the sun . . ." The chief, Slocum wrote, "might have been taken for a great scholar or statesman, the least assuming of the men I met on the voyage."<sup>13</sup>

Before Slocum left the islands, he sold the last of his tallow to a German soap-boiler. Toloa, "a sort of Queen of the May," brought him a bottle of coconut oil for his hair, a farewell present "which another man might have regarded as coming late." The point of the joke is easily



missed when one looks at a photo of the captain with his hat on. When he called on her the last time, Mrs. Stevenson gave him a couple of bamboo trees.

Life in "summer-land" Samoa was a poem, as Slocum noted. "For food the islanders have only to put out their hand . . ." There were the hospitable natives, the beverage, ava, to be drunk from a coconut shell, the laughing tapo girls dressed in cloth made of the bark of the mulberry tree, diving from the stern of the *Spray*—"nothing could have been more delightfully simple." Some men would have lingered long, some forever. But Slocum stayed only a month. He still had miles to go.

On 26 August 1896, the *Spray* stood out of the harbor. After such happy days, departure was a lonesome thing, and the captain resorted at once to the old remedy: making himself as busy as possible. He crowded on sail. He steered for "lovely Australia," with its many memories of twenty-five years before. Virginia's people were waiting to welcome him. But again, not a word of personal concerns got into the book. He said only that Australia was "not a strange land" to him. And so he plowed on through another long passage at sea—almost a month and a half this time—mostly through storms and gales.

*There was little to report on this  
part of the voyage, except  
changeable winds...and  
rough seas.*

ALMOST A year and a half had passed since Slocum set sail. He had overcome the false start made to the eastward, and now was half way around the world. At that point, what he had done no sailor known to history had done before.

News of the record-breaking Boston-to-Boston voyage was gathering momentum. It overtook and preceded the *Spray* to Australia.

In those days the Australian papers, reflecting the pioneer outlook of the people in the new-old land, usually took a critical, even hostile, view of a stranger reaching their shores. No favors were sought, and none were given. But an exception was made of Slocum. They responded to him. They welcomed him as one of their own.

When "The Pilot" of the *Sydney Daily Shipping News* heard that Slocum, coming from Samoa, had made the Australian seaboard at Newcastle, in a boat no bigger than a typical Sydney harbor sloop, he burst into irrepressible song.

Hear the song of skipper Slocum  
Best afloat  
This is not a Yankee Fairy  
Anecdote,  
But the plain unvarnished story  
Of a seaman bold and hoary  
Who set out in search of Glory  
In a boat.  
All alone he sailed from Boston  
One fine day  
In a swagger little lugger  
Called the Spray,  
Bound to cross the broad Atlantic  
(True a most peculiar antic!)  
Even tho' the gales were frantic  
Every day.  
All's well however that ends well  
They say:  
Which applies to skipper Slocum  
And the Spray.  
Therefore let us sing their praises  
(Like we do all other crazes)  
In a manner which amazes  
Hip, Hooray.<sup>1</sup>

It was not only that to Australians the New England skipper was of kindred spirit and stuff: but as a native of Nova Scotia, he was a true-born British brother. And he had the British heart of oak, something the *Sydney Morning Herald* could appreciate.

"No doubt the daring exploits of Captain Joshua Slo-

cum are unique and he is not likely to have many imitators; but of admirers and sympathizers there are legion. And this could hardly be the case if the ideal were not still at the long last and in the deep inner heart of humanity a more powerful motive than the real—if adventure and danger, now as formerly were not regarded as finer qualities than comfort and ease. If that were not really so, those gallant voyagers who make such persistent efforts to reach the North Pole would be regarded as hopeless lunatics, Stanley would probably have been set down as a monomaniac with a partiality for African wanderings, and as for Captain Slocum—well, Captain Slocum would have to be placed in a special class of derangement by himself. But, as we know, this is not the attitude of the world at all . . . Captain Slocum is feted by British squadrons and hailed everywhere as a worthy descendant of an illustrious line of sea-kings. And so probably it will be to the end of time; the highest intellectual development is not likely ever to lessen the delight which we all naturally feel in stirring action—in worthy deeds worthily carried to an end.

“. . . in the voyage of the *Spray* we see action and thoughtful intelligence permeating the requisite courage of the navigator . . . It proves that two conspicuously British qualities, method and adventure, are still active; and that a man if he have a strong purpose and a strong heart may live to himself for twelve months or so in a cockleshell on the storm-tossed seas, even in these days of overpowering luxury.”<sup>2</sup>

While Slocum rested at Newcastle, a ghost of his former merchantman's career suddenly came to life.

Henry A. Slater, former second officer on the *Northern*

*Light*, was living in Sydney, and had been for some time. An ex-convict when Slocum had signed him on years ago, Slater was now an ex-constable. He had served the colony in the Darlinghurst police and, in a scuffle with burglars, had been slugged with a jimmy, shot twice, and seriously wounded. Later, at the trial, in which the burglars were acquitted, Slater referred to his treatment on the *Northern Light* as proof of his powers of physical endurance. Following this, he was appointed door-keeper, or messenger, or porter (he has been described as all three) at the Works Department.

When Slater heard that his one-time commander had docked at Newcastle, and soon would be coming to Sydney, he went to work. He addressed public meetings in which he accused the captain of vile and pitiless practices when the two had been shipmates, thirteen years before. He gave, "in his own words," his story to the *Daily Telegraph*. In reading it here, remember that Slater, in 1896, was describing events which had happened, if at all, at a time and place long past.

"In the year 1883 I signed articles as second mate of the ship *Northern Light*, then under the command of Captain Joshua Slocum, at Port Elizabeth, South Africa. In the course of conversation the captain told me that he had a very mutinous crew, and that as the other officers were afraid of the men he wanted an officer of my stamp to keep them in order. He gave me to understand that I was to be a regular 'Bucco,' or bully, on board.

"Shortly after I had come on board, the next morning, I heard Mrs. Slocum, the captain's wife, scream, and running to the gangway found that one of her children had

fallen overboard. I jumped over after the child, as also did a man in my watch named Hansen, and succeeded in saving the child and bringing it safely on board. The harbor, I may state, is infested by sharks. Mrs. Slocum was effusive in her thanks, but the captain never mentioned a word about the matter.

"All went smoothly until the day before we started on the voyage to New York, whither we were bound. The captain and first mate being ashore I was in charge of the ship. I told the third mate, M'Quaker, to do a job with some of the crew forward. Shortly afterwards I heard a row, and going forward, saw M'Quaker unmercifully beating one of the crew. I remonstrated with him, whereupon he answered me in a very insulting manner, and said that my time would come when we got to sea. I ordered him to his cabin, when he began to use most disgusting language, and on his way aft kicked a boy whom he passed, saying at the time that he was one of my favorites. I was so incensed that I gave him a thorough thrashing. The captain and mate came on board a little later, and M'Quaker was for some time closeted with Slocum.

"Some days after we had sailed from Port Elizabeth, Captain Slocum came to me and asked me when I 'was going to start on the crew,' explaining that I had said that I would play the deuce with the men when we got to sea. I intimated that I was not prepared to beat and ill-treat the men for his satisfaction, as I found them good seamen and respectful and obedient. I also warned him that if he ill-treated any of the men I would be a witness against him. He went away muttering to himself. About a fortnight after leaving port the captain came up while I was

directing a job on the mizzen mast, and found fault with the work. I pointed out that I was competent to do the work, and had satisfactorily superintended the same work on the fore mast. He had a sheath knife in his hand, and he rushed over and struck at me. I caught his hand, twisted the knife out of his grasp, and threw it overboard. He then went below.

"That evening I slipped and fell, fracturing my right ribs, and the next day called the captain and told him that I would have to lay up. He replied that he would have no loafing on his ship, that he would disrate me, and ordered me forward to the fore-castle. I told him that he dared not disrate me, when he rushed at me, knocked me down, and kicked me about the face and head. I was carried forward by the other officers, and placed in a berth in the fore-castle. The next morning the captain, first and third mates, carpenter, and boatswain dragged me on deck, and the captain spat at me and struck me in the face with a belaying pin. I managed to crawl back to the fore-castle, and then fainted. When I woke up in the evening the men held a consultation, and agreed that they would not stand by and see me ill-treated in the manner I had been.

"The men began arming themselves and sharpening their knives, but I begged of them not to interfere, as the officers were armed, and I feared that there would be bloodshed. I entreated them not to interfere with the captain and officers, pointing out that they would be severely punished as mutineers if they did, and I would be charged as the ringleader. At first they would not listen, but eventually I got them to promise not to interfere, whatever happened, but to take note of everything, taking day and

date, so that when we reached port we could have justice meted out to us.

"The next morning the captain and officers and carpenter and boatswain came forward, armed with revolvers and cutlasses, and handcuffed my hands behind my back. They then threw me down the half-deck, and kept me there all day without food or water. About midnight I wrested my hands free, and crawled on deck, and into the mate's cabin, where I secured a revolver. After deliberating for some time, I threw the revolver overboard and went forward and lay down.

"About 8 o'clock the following morning the carpenter came to the fore-castle and nailed up one of the doors and the shutter. Then the captain and his officers and petty officers came forward and ordered all the men on deck. The officers then began to fire their revolvers into the fore-castle. Fortunately I was not struck by any of the bullets. After a time the mate, Mitchell, called upon me to surrender. He was afraid to enter the fore-castle for some time, but at last came in when I told him that I was unarmed. He told me that the trouble would blow over, and that he would see me reinstated as second mate. I got up, and he helped me to the door. When I got out on deck I was seized from behind, knocked down, and two pairs of handcuffs were put on my wrists. I was then dragged aft to the poop, where shackles were put on my ankles. A chain was then placed round my throat, crossed behind my neck, wound around my body under my arms, down through the handcuffs, down through my legs, then up to the back of my neck, and made fast. Then a length of chain was made fast to the shackles on my ankles, and



the whole lot of chain rivetted together. I had then over 80 lb. of chain on my body.

"The captain then told the carpenter to partition off a portion of the lazaret for my reception. This was beneath the cabin, and there was a passage in the 'tween decks on each side of the cabin about 4 ft. wide and 4 ft. deep. One end was nailed up, and I was dragged up and thrown down the hatch into the lazaret. The captain then ordered the other end to be boarded up. I was then in a space 4 ft. by 4 ft., and 5 ft. long. I am 5 ft. 10 in. in height, so I had not too much room in which to lie down. I could not reach my mouth with my hands on account of the chains. A hole was cut in one of the boards, and one end of the chain attached to my ankle was pulled through and made fast to a stanchion outside my 'box.'

"At first my daily fare was one ship's biscuit and a half pint of water. That did not kill me, so the same amount of biscuit and about three or four tablespoonsful of water was tried. Still I did not die. For the first three weeks in this 'box' I suffered the tortures of the damned, my hunger and thirst were intolerable. I begged Captain Slocum to give me water and food; but in vain.

"After I had been for about thirty days in the box I heard Mrs. Slocum playing a hymn on the organ. She played, 'Nearer, My God, to Thee,' and I joined in, and began to sing. Suddenly, while I was singing, the chain attached to my ankles was hauled up to the hole, bringing my feet up about three feet from the deck. I was kept in this position for over three days without food or water. At the end of that time the captain came down fully armed to see me. He let my legs down again.

"I begged of him to give me some water. He laughed, and said, 'Are you very thirsty, old man? Very well, I will give you a good drink if you promise to behave yourself.' I promised I would not sing again, and he went and got me a big dipper of water. I said, 'God bless you, Captain Slocum, for your kindness in bringing me this water.' I then began to drink, and found that he had given me a dipper of sea water. I had drunk quite a quantity before I ascertained that the water was salt, and naturally my thirst was increased a hundredfold. The next day I received my usual allowance of water and biscuit.

"I began to find the rats troublesome about now. I would often wake up and find them running all over me, and even biting my skin—I had no flesh. I wondered why they came after me, as I was nothing but skin and bone. I soon found out. I frequently fancied about this time that I could smell butter or melted cheese. I found out later on that Captain Slocum used to pour melted butter or cheese on to what remained of my clothes to attract the rats.

"After I had been about 40 days in the box, a large rat was running over me, and I succeeded in catching him in my hands. I was in such a desperate state of hunger that I squeezed the life out of the rat, and then ate it. I never, however, managed to get this change of diet again.

"My box was never once cleaned out for the period of 53 days during which I was confined therein, nor was I allowed to wash myself. After the first couple of weeks I broke out into a rash, and found that I was covered with vermin. The rats had almost stripped me of my clothing, and were often gnawing at my legs and arms. Captain Slocum would occasionally come down, bringing with him

bread and meat or cakes or doughnuts, show them to me, and then deliberately eat them before me. Shortly before we arrived in New York, the captain brought down some carbolic acid to disinfect my box, and sprinkled some on my body and face, drops falling in my mouth and eyes.

"On arriving at New York I was arrested and tried for mutiny, and honorably acquitted. Captain Slocum and his two mates were then arrested, and were each severely punished for their cruelty to me. The captain was fined 500 dollars and the mates 100 dollars each.

"I ask the public before making a god of this man to wait until I am placed face to face with him. I do not make these statements to gain notoriety, or even sympathy, but simply to show my fellow-citizens what kind of a man they are dealing with in Captain Joshua Slocum."<sup>3</sup>

After hearing Slater's side of the old grudge-controversy, the paper had its Newcastle man see Slocum, and advise him of Slater's charges. From that place, the reporter wired that the captain "does not deny that he imprisoned Slater, but this was done, he says, only after the latter had broken out of the stateroom, where he was first confined for insubordination. Captain Slocum alleges that, though ironed and placed in a stateroom, Slater broke out of his place of confinement and armed himself. He also states that he (Slater) attempted to incite the crew to mutiny. Thereupon he (Captain Slocum) had him ironed and imprisoned in an apartment specially built for the purpose in the lazarette. Captain Slocum declined to make any set statement in reply to the allegations of Slater, but he placed at the disposal of your reporter a book containing a number of clippings from American papers referring

to the case of the Northern Light. These included an account of an interview between the reporter of a paper called the 'Telegram' and a sailor who served on board the Northern Light at the time Captain Slocum commanded her, and Slater held the position of third mate. This man, in his statement, contradicted Slater in his story of his imprisonment and treatment by Captain Slocum on board the Northern Light. The man in question, a sailor named Dimmock, expressed to the reporter his opinion that Slater was, although a bad man, not cruelly treated by Captain Slocum. The interview with Dimmock resulted in a number of charges being laid against Slater on the score of competency and conduct generally as a ship's officer. Clippings from other American papers go to support the captain's contention that Slater, and not he, was in fault in the trouble that took place on board the Northern Light. Captain Slocum says that he does not fear a complete investigation of the whole affair. He readily admits that the American courts fined him \$500 for his action in regard to Slater, the whole of which his underwriters paid; but he urges that the judge summed up in his favor when placing the case before the jury, and expressed the belief that he (Captain Slocum) did not act with malice or with motives of revenge, but was actuated merely by a desire to maintain discipline and to bring his ship safely into port. Copious extracts from newspapers published in America at that time to a large extent support Captain Slocum's statements."

The *Daily Telegraph*, determined to be fair, and even generous, to Slocum, also published "Alleged Affidavit by Slater," copied by their reporter from the captain's scrap-

book of clippings. The affidavit is the one made 12 January 1884, in which Slater blamed the harshness of his treatment on the chief mate of the *Northern Light*, rather than the captain.

While the newspapers fanned up more heat than light from the ashes of the past, Slocum was ready to push on to Sydney. As a navigator should, he had shaped and reshaped his course in accordance with winds and currents and seasons. He had tried to steer clear of pirates. At no time, however, did he make a major change in his plans in order to avoid threats of trouble. He did not fear discomfort, nor did he ever lack faith in his ability to handle any situation. His sensitivities did not go outward, but inward, and even while circling the globe, he remained in a personal world.

Slocum, the solitary Yankee, made no attempt to fathom the run of men. He felt apart from them. This feeling was reinforced and sanctioned by the etiquette and traditions of the merchant service, by which a captain was elevated to a lonely and impregnable position.

Captain Slocum lived by this now antiquated code. Alone on the *Spray*, he still adhered to it. Though his command was rather reduced, he was still the captain. No one was going to get to windward of him. Nothing was going to deter him from bringing his ship into port. And so the very next day after hearing of Slater's charges, the captain set sail for the capital of New South Wales.

*No one can know the pleasure of sailing free over the great oceans save those who have had the experience.*

ON THE evening of 9 October, coming down from Newcastle, Slocum sailed into Sydney harbor, one of the most beautiful in the world, and into the welcoming arms of the harbor police. "I came to in a snug cove . . ." he wrote later in *Sailing Alone*, "the Sydney Harbor police-boat giving me a pluck into anchorage while they gathered data from an old scrap-book of mine . . . Nothing escapes the vigilance of the New South Wales police . . . Some said they came to arrest me, and—well, let it go at that."

Actually, however, Slocum did not let it go at that, even though he was not well. Coming away from Newcastle, he had been struck on the head by a heaving line thrown by a too-helpful hand. By the time he reached Sydney he was in considerable pain and anxious to see a doctor—so he told the the seemingly ever-present reporter.<sup>1</sup>

In Sydney, Slocum promptly took the offensive. He went after Slater. The changes time had wrought in their lives, since the two men had met, appeared greater than they really were. Slocum was poor and alone now, yet he still sailed the seas, still was master, owner, and entre-

preneur. Slater was secure in a government job, but he still worked for wages, and, in fact, had drifted lower in the scale of command and prestige.

The captain brought up Slater in Water Police Court to have him bound over to keep the peace. He told the magistrate, Mr. G. W. F. Addison, that he did so to preserve his life and person, that he had known the defendant some time, and that he believed him to be a man who might carry out a threat. The captain said that on the afternoon of the 7th, at the Queen's Statue, haranguing a crowd, Slater had used these words: "This Captain Joshua Slocum, God help him when we meet. I'll not be responsible for my actions. This man you are making an angel of, I'll make an angel of him when I get hold of him."

The hearing continued with Slater cross-examining Slocum:

"Slater: Who gave you the information?

"Mr. Addison: Don't answer that question.

"Slater: Will you swear that this action has not been taken out of malice?

"Mr. Addison: What is the use of asking such a question? The complainant has already said that he wants protection from certain threats you are alleged to have made.

"Slater: I don't know the law.

"Mr. Addison: Well you ought to. Were you not a policeman?

"Slater: You have been here for ten days, and have I done you any harm?

"Mr. Addison: What's the use of asking such a question?

"Slater: Is this not the first time you have seen me for about thirteen years?

"Captain Slocum: I have not seen you for about that time.

"Slater: Are you afraid of me?

"Captain Slocum: Well, you are a most excitable man, and, from the language you have used, you might possibly do me an injury. I certainly am, to a certain extent, afraid of you.

"Slater: You ought to be at least morally afraid of me.

"George Walker, clerk, said he heard the words set forth in the information used by the defendant at the Queen's Statue on the afternoon of the 7th instant.\*

"Slater: I did not speak at the Statue on that day.

"Detective Rochaix said that he had heard the defendant use the following when addressing a crowd, at the General Post Office: 'Captain Slocum is a coward. He daren't meet me face to face. But I will force him to meet me.'

"Slater then made a statement denying that he had used the words of which he was accused."<sup>2</sup>

When the hearing was over, the magistrate told Slater to keep the peace for six months. As security for fulfillment of that obligation, he was required to put up eighty pounds.

But the matter did not end there. Slater's next move

\* The George Walker in this scene will be remembered as Virginia's younger brother. The close and good feelings between Slocum and the Walkers continued to the ends of their lives.



was to make a sworn statement denying the old affidavit made in New York. And in spite of the decision in Water Police Court, he went on addressing public meetings. "Feeling is running very high . . . and the city promises to be divided into sections over this alleged ill-treatment of 13 years ago," the *Daily Telegraph* said. Slater was speaking "in language which not only showed an almost frenzied earnestness, but which also suggested a lively contempt for the libel law. Slater expressed the desire to meet Captain Slocum on the public platform . . . He promised that he would shortly procure chains and shackles, and exhibit himself as he says he was bound on the Northern Light."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, with the *Spray* anchored in a quiet cove of the harbor, and Slocum disposed to stay for a peaceful month, he was interviewed again. Again, the *Daily Telegraph* reported the blow on the head, followed by violent headache. Again, asked about Slater's charges, "the captain said he was very much disgusted that any credence should be placed in the statement made. He hinted that there was some sinister and hidden purpose in the statements, but no amount of pressing would induce him to be more explicit. He, however, showed our representative further writings from newspapers, exonerating him from all blame in the affair . . .

" 'My whole life,' he said, 'is open to inquiry; and I do not think anyone can prove a dishonorable action against me. I, however,' he continued, 'hardly like accepting the hospitality of the Sydney people, after this attempt of Slater's to blacken my character. If I was guilty of what he accuses me, I would be ashamed to land in your city.

I will later expose the falsity of the accusations, and lay bare the motives of the accuser.'

"Captain Slocum was looking fairly well, though a bit haggard."

One can believe that Slater was cruelly confined, and also that he was a neurotic who overstated his case. As far as Slocum was concerned, in his certainty of rightness, and of Slater's wrongness, he remained as aggressive in 1896 as he had been in 1883. He had that tendency to positiveness which sailing has always engendered in those who come under its spell.

But like any topic of the hour, the Slocum-Slater argument ran its course. Only a few days later, on 12 October, there were cheerful headlines: "Reception of Captain Slocum/ The Spray Towed Up the Harbour/ Congratulatory Address."<sup>4</sup>

A reception committee had chartered the steamer, *Minerva*, and with about 130 people aboard, had set out from Circular Quay, crossed Sydney Harbor, and steamed to the cove called North Harbor where the *Spray* lay at anchor. The captain was on deck, aft, and in response to the cheering on board, dipped his flag. In fact, he was becoming a pretty indefatigable flag-dipper. Some of the Walker family, who had come out with the party, went aboard the *Spray*. When they returned "the formal part of the proceedings took place . . ."

Slocum was brought on board the *Minerva*, and enthusiastically cheered. A Mr. F. B. Evans spoke. He said that he wished "on behalf of those who had assembled there to extend to Captain Slocum a hearty and cordial

welcome. He thought that they were entitled to greet Capt. Slocum in this manner as a yachtsman and as an intrepid navigator, who had achieved the feat of travelling round the world alone (applause). They had heard different things about Captain Slocum, but they were only there to welcome him as a daring man who had travelled over all seas without even anyone to stand to the main sheet (applause) . . .”

A telescope and a badge were presented to the captain. He replied with “a few words to express his thanks for the reception that had been accorded him . . . He thought he should be able to satisfy every gentleman who up to the present had only heard of the man at the tail of the cart. Those who were present he felt believed in him—their presence implied it. That endorsement was pleasing, and he wanted no other at present. He would stand a little while quietly. But there were some other things going on which he could not speak about just now. They would however hear from him again, when he would speak to some purpose. It was the God of Justice that had sent him to Australia. He thanked them heartily for the generous way in which they had received him (applause) . . .

“The Johnstones Bay Sailing Club had specially chartered the Balmain steamer ‘Lady Manning’ to follow some races which took place on that day. At the termination of the races, she steamed down to Bradley’s to enable her passengers to have a look at the ‘Spray.’ As she lay a short distance away, some of the reception committee appealed to some of the crowds which covered her in every part, to give Capt. Slocum a cheer. But there was a profound silence on the steamer. Eventually one of the committee

standing on the bridge of the 'Minerva,' shouted . . . 'Now then, Balmain people, three cheers for Captain Slocum.' This forcible appeal was answered by some hostile display, although some of the 'Lady Manning' passengers waved their hats. Another appeal only produced additional boo-hooing and although the receptionists on the 'Minerva' lustily cheered at the same time, they were not of sufficient strength to outweigh the hostile demonstration . . ."

Long before the allotted month was out, the Slater matter seems to have been forgotten. Slocum was, as usual, making friends and accepting and declining invitations.

MANLEY Nov 11th 96\*

The Spray

Frank J. Donovan Esq:—

Dear Sir

I was not able to avail myself of the honor to attend the Balmain Annual Regatta Prince of Wales Birthday

The friend whom I had engaged to care for the Spray could not come and circumstances wer such that I could not bring the beloved old craft along.

I regret very much at having missied so much

Thanking you Sir for your courtesy I am truly yours

/s/ Josh Slocum<sup>5</sup>

"The beloved old craft" could not go to the party, but then neither would Slocum leave her at home alone.

Almost everywhere he sailed, Slocum was offered friendship, and usually in tangible form. In Sydney, he told a reporter that the rig of the *Spray* was laughed at. "I left Boston rigged as a sloop," he explained, "but when

\* Manly is a suburb to the north of Sydney.

off Cape Horn my sloop sails were blown away, and I had to rig her as best I could." He needed new sails, and no sooner did he make his wants known, than a new suit of sails was delivered to the cabin door, the gift of Mark Foy, Australian department store founder, and yacht club commodore. Slocum, delighted, bent on the new canvas, but at the same time he did not jettison the old. He was too canny and thrifty for that. Indeed, he may already have had in mind the ingenious use to which he would later put it.

Traveling alone, he was asked in Sydney the question he was asked in all other places. He answered: "Though I do not feel oppressively lonely on my solitary voyage, I am always glad to get to port. I am, paradoxical as it may seem, really a sociable man . . ." It was, however, an evasive answer, sounding more sociable than it really was. Slocum's kind of talk achieved sociability, and yet it told very little.

No one who knew the captain, including his children, has claimed to have known him well. It is clear that despite a friendly loquaciousness, nobody knew what went on inside him. Nor did he know himself. "I am really a modest man and feel quite frightened of a demonstration," he also told them in Sydney. Again, it would seem that he was concealing the greater part of the truth. The effort he was making at control and reserve was in conflict with an almost exhibitionistic need to display himself and be noted.

*I trusted now to the mercies of the  
Maker of all reefs, keeping a good  
lookout at the same time for  
perils on every hand.*

CAPTAIN JOSHUA stayed two months in the city in which Virginia had grown into womanhood. He wrote that the time "flew fast."

On 6 December, in early Australian summer, the *Spray*, in her new suit of sails and yawl-rigged now, left Sydney to coast through Bass Strait. Slocum's intention was to sail south, then westward, below Australia, and out into the Indian Ocean. He was on his way home.

Christmas was spent at a berth on the Yarra River at Melbourne, but Slocum lost no time in moving to ' . Kilda, farther down the harbor. "The *Spray* paid no port charges . . . anywhere . . . except at Pernambuco, till she poked her nose into the customhouse at Melbourne, where she was charged tonnage dues . . . The collector extracted six shillings and sixpence . . . I squared the matter by charging people sixpence each for coming on board, and when this business got dull I caught a shark and charged them sixpence each to look at that . . ."<sup>1</sup> This sweetening of the kitty, when added to what he had picked up elsewhere, made it necessary for the captain to go to the

nearest bank. And he had started the trip with \$1.50 in his pocket!

An almost continuous southwest wind kept Slocum at St. Kilda a month. What with adverse winds, and ice drifting up from the Antarctic, he decided to change his route. That meant he would have to return to Sydney. But not right away; the season was not yet right. Meanwhile, he would visit Tasmania. It was a place he had never been although, "years before," he had sailed around it. To sail into the great or lesser ports of the world, free and unsuspected, governed only by the tides, and seasons, and one's feelings, seems part of a far-off age. And yet, it was not so long ago. There are men who remember those days clearly: Burford Sampson of Tasmania and Australia, recalled:

"... The unexpected arrival of the *Spray* at the mouth of the Tamar River caused much excitement in the town of Launceston, when the news was received from Low Head Pilot Station that Captain Slocum intended to sail her up to the town, some 44 miles away. The Tamar is one of the few rivers in the world which is navigable for vessels of 5,000 tons from its mouth to its source—tidal, with a rise of from eleven to fourteen feet, on the ebb with a current of some six or seven knots. It is a splendid waterway, two to three miles wide in places—at its source is Launceston, a town at the time of the Yankee skipper's visit of some 20,000 souls. He sailed her up without a pilot. During his stay of a week or so—the little craft was thrown open for inspection and he gave two or three lectures in a public hall on his single handed voyage, which

filled us schoolboys with wonder and not a little awe . . . The citizens headed by the Mayor, gave Slocum a civic welcome and the lecture hall was packed to the doors at all his lectures.

"The Captain was exceedingly good to us kids, marking our atlases for us with his log and telling us of his experiences when passing through the Straits of Magellan . . . He told us he was never lonely and that well out on the ocean, he always turned in at night without any fears and had a good night's sleep, knowing the little *Spray* would not let him down. He said he found peace in the midst of the ocean . . . He said 'Spray is a fine sea boat'; this we found hard to imagine for her draught was very shallow . . . We also thought she would not be much good to windward, but he said she was not bad and a good all rounder. To us, this dry humourous Yankee was a hero, and we worshipped accordingly. Also, before he went away . . . we prevailed on our mothers, cousins and aunts to come to light with jams, jellies and other not perishable grub, to stock up the *Spray's* larder . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Thus in Tasmania, too, the ever-resourceful Massachusetts merchantman found still another means of making a dollar, and of being heard and noticed.

In more ways than one, the lectures had become a necessity. The *Spray*, as a show, was so popular in some ports that to handle the crowds and answer the questions was a chore. "I never worked so hard in my life," Slocum told a friend. "I would be dog-tired at night and drop right down."<sup>3</sup>

The first lecture was held in a hall in a town near the



mouth of the Tamar. Free rent was given by the owner, "a kind lady from Scotland," so the venture was at once a success.

Free advice was given by a Tasmanian gentleman. In his first attempts on the platform, Slocum said he felt uneasy. His new-found friend reassured him. "Man, man," he said to the captain, "great nervousness is only a sign of brain, and the more brain a man has the longer it takes him to get over the affliction. But you will get over it." In recalling the helpful words several years later, Slocum added that he thought it "only fair to say" that he was not yet quite cured.

Tasmanians took to Slocum. One day, while he was away from the *Spray*, he returned to find a letter on board. He opened it and read: "A lady sends Mr. Slocum the enclosed five-pound note as a token of her appreciation of his bravery in crossing the wide seas on so small a boat, and all alone, without human sympathy to help . . ." The lady did not call again and he never found out who she was.

On his part, the poet-sailor "was haunted by the beauty of the landscape all about . . . If there was a moment in my voyage when I could have given it up, it was there and then . . ."

But, of course, give up was the one thing he could not do. On 16 April 1897, Slocum filled away again. Summer was ending; winter was blowing up from the south. That meant fair winds for the north. It took only eight days to sail back to Sydney. There, the captain was laid up for a couple of weeks—complaint: neuralgia.

Getting under way once more, northward bound, Slo-

cum now found fine weather. He settled down to reading day and night, and left that "pleasant occupation" only to trim sail, or tack, "or to lie down and rest, while the *Spray* nibbled at the miles." He compared his state with that of circumnavigators of olden times. "Their hardships and romantic escapes—those of them who escaped death and worse sufferings—did not enter my experience, sailing all alone around the world. For me is left only to tell of pleasant experiences, till finally my adventures are prosy and tame."

Slocum passed peacefully among the islands of the Great Barrier Reef on Australia's east coast. He stopped in Queensland to lecture again. At Cooktown, where he moored the *Spray* nearly abreast of the Captain Cook monument, and saw "the very stones the great navigator had seen," he lectured for charity in the Presbyterian Church. He made Thursday Island, mid-channel in Torres Strait, on 22 June, and, as the only American Victorian in port, helped celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the good Queen's reign—a jubilee with an Australian corroboree in it. Ten days later, he sighted the large island of Timor to the north; on 11 July, Christmas Island was abeam and Slocum and the *Spray* were out on the Indian Ocean, bound west.

It was now only 550 miles to the Keeling or Cocos Islands, but unless the lone navigator could hold a true course, he would surely miss the tiny atoll. Slocum made the islands dead ahead. "The first unmistakable signs of the land was a visit one morning from a white tern that fluttered very knowingly about the vessel, and then took itself off westward with a business-like air in its wing . . .

Farther on I came among a great number of birds . . . My reckoning was up, and springing aloft, I saw from half-way up the mast cocoa-nut trees standing out of the water ahead. I expected to see this; still, it thrilled me as an electric shock might have done. I slid down the mast, trembling under the strangest sensations; and not able to resist the impulse, I sat on deck and gave way to my emotions. To folks in a parlor on shore this may seem weak indeed, but I am telling the story of a voyage alone.”\*

Slocum dropped anchor in the island lagoon 17 July, to stay several weeks. From there he wrote Joseph Gilder, heading the letter: “The Spray tied to a palm-tree at Keeling-Cocos Islands Aug 20th 1897.”\*

Perhaps you did not expect to get a letter from this little kingdom in the sea; but one never knows what may happen and the risks one runs—on the land.

Keeling Cocos is a strange little world owned by the first settlers, a family of Scotch of the name of Cluenis-Ross. Many things here are the reverse of other lands and the women, to use a homely phrase, rule the roost. It comes hard on the men. It would do the soul of the wretched Fuegian woman good to see the Keeling “lord and master” up a cocoanut tree. I am looking over these things as I sail along. The heart of a missionary is all on fire to reconstruct the religion of this people. If ever one sets foot on this peaceful land, I hope he will not be of the soul-destroying sort that spoiled my earley days—

\*The conversation with yourself, once, often comes

\* The letter was addressed, Joseph B. Gilder, N. Y. Critic, 287 Fourth Ave., New York.

to mind, about our thoughts at sea. While I may not think clear I am certainly clearer at sea than in a busy city and the thing most on my mind, that is, the business in hand, the reckoning, as I sailed along has been better kept than ever before on any ship of mine soever well officered. Was it from being even more alone in my case.

Looking over the journals of all the old voyagers I see none, working the old fashioned methods, so nearly correct as the *Spray* has been in making her land-falls—seven times now in succession. I never did better when I had even the best of chronometers and officers to assist—now will you tell me where it comes in? my “chro” is a one-dollar tin clock! And of course is almost no time piece at all—I have to boil here often to keep her at it, from noon to noon,\* through the months.

Some thinking man will help me out on this else I will never be able to explain how it is done.—The one thing most certain about my sea reckonings: They are not kept with slavish application at all and I have been right every time and seemed *to know* that I was right; Even a lunar observation (so far have taken only one on the voyage) taken, of course, alone, was practically correct, I found, a few hours later, when I made the land.

There was not a difference of five miles between Lunar obsvs dead reckoning and the true position of the vessel assuming the longitude of the Marqueses to be correct. I was then 43 days out and had not lost 6 hours rest But the vessel had sailed at her top speed all that time or all the time that the wind blew hard

Your N. Y. ladies I see are going in for yachting

\* On shipboard the day begins at noon.

Why not study navigation too? A lady, in your city born, used to stand on deck and take good "sights" and work them, too, as correctly as any one could do\*

My plan, to be useful, will be to sail a "college" ship around the world!

How I would like to teach young people in the science of Nautical Astronomy

A fine sailing ship would be my choice & she should be a flyer making steamboat time without the bustle of steam and all its discomforts

I smile at some of the comments made on my present insignificant "outing" Some think I am exploring the resources of a man under great disadvantages. They are most all very kind in their comments but most all wrong as to the real object of my voyage which to tell the truth I did not think would interest our people; so I merely remarked before shoving off that I was going alone

What I sailed for I have got, and more I found things I did not dream of meeting with I hoist them all in—have worked harder in port than at sea—I have now a valuable cargo—Sail tomorrow homeward.

Do you think our people will care for a story of the voyage around?<sup>6</sup>

Slocum sailed again, not "tomorrow," but the day after that, 22 August. By evening, the islands were out of sight, except in his "strongest affection." Later, he wrote: "If there is a paradise on earth, it is Keeling."

Two years and four months had elapsed since Slocum had left Boston. Apparently friends at home had not heard

\* Virginia Walker, though raised in Australia, was born in New York. A reference to his first wife.

much from him. Before Joe Gilder's letter arrived, post-marked Batavia, 29 September 1897 (more than a month after it was written), and not received till 3 November, he had inquired of the captain's lawyers, Cowen, Wing, Putnam & Burlingham of New York, as to the captain's whereabouts. The firm had advised that their last word had come from Melbourne, 17 January. "He does not say when he is coming home. He says that he is writing now and then to the N. Y. Sunday World," they added.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout all those months, to whom was Slocum writing? Hettie? His children? No letters are mentioned in Victor's book. And though Victor was a letter-saver, there were none from his father to him among his papers.<sup>8</sup> B. Aymar wrote: "I believe J. S. wrote mostly to me—and often."<sup>9</sup> But no letter to B. Aymar from those years survives either. Jessie wrote: . . . "about any letters I might have received from father . . . if I did they were destroyed many years ago."<sup>10</sup> Garfield wrote that he never in his life had a letter from the captain.<sup>11</sup>

As for Hettie, we can be almost sure that if letters were written and received by her, they have not survived.<sup>12</sup> What we do know is that two days after Slocum left Keeling Cocos, homeward bound, he was reported in New Bedford: "Probably Lost. Family of Capt. Josiah [sic] Slocum Relinquish All Hope . . . Believed That He Was Drowned During a Heavy Storm.

"Providence, Aug. 24—Capt. Josiah Slocum, who sailed from Boston April 24, 1895, with the intent of circumnavigating the globe in a cockle shell, is probably lost. His daughter, who lives in Attleboro, has heard nothing from him in some time, and it is believed that his little boat

Spray has been overcome in an ocean storm. Captain Slocum kept those at home posted as to his movements and when the weeks and then months passed without word of any kind from him the fear became the belief that he was no more . . . ”<sup>18</sup>

But not long after that, the *New York Evening Post* had a different report on the voyage of the *Spray*: “. . . The Little Sloop with Capt. Slocum at Port Louis, Mauritius.”

“Port Louis, Island of Mauritius, September 21.—The forty-foot sloop *Spray*, Capt. Joshua Slocum, of Boston, Mass., has arrived here on her way around the world . . . ”

From Keeling Cocos, Slocum had sailed to Rodriguez, “far out in the Indian Ocean, like land adrift.” He had spent eight restful days at “the mid-ocean land of plenty,” and then gone on to Mauritius. There he was royally entertained. He lectured, and wore a new suit, “trying to rig like a man ashore.” He took seven young ladies for a sail in the sloop before, on 26 October, the *Spray* again put to sea.

Now he reached the limit of the trade winds which had carried him some thousands of miles from Australia. Suddenly, there was no more wind. For a whole day and night he lay becalmed. With furled sails he sat in the stillness of the ocean. Then a breeze came up which turned into a gale. The *Spray* suffered much, he wrote. She was driven in many directions. For four days she drifted about, within 60 miles of Natal, South Africa, awaiting a favorable wind for the harbor. On 17 November, she made Durban, and “dropped anchor near the old Forerunner,

in the creek before anyone had a chance to get on board."<sup>14</sup>

No, Slocum was not drowned. From the Royal Hotel, Durban, 9 December 1897, very worldly conscious, he wrote Roberts Brothers:

. . . By this mail I send you P. O. Order for £ 5—about the amt, with interest, I hope, that you paid my son Victor, some time ago (\$20)

My ambition is to pay all my little debts before I reach home. I see no reason, now, why I shall not be able to do so

I had quite a long pull to get at what I am about now— . . .

I met Stanley, here, the other day.\* I was at the time, a guest of Colonel Saunderson, M. P. Stanley is M. P. you remember It is said that he can do more by keeping quiet than any man alive

He wanted to know what I would do without compartments if the Spray should strike a rock? "Must keep her off the rocks." "If a sword-fish should run her through?" what then?" "That *would* boom my show" Stanley must have been bored for he gave a . . . nile that would make a worried editor yell with envy--

We all had coffee then and Irish Stories. Stanley however gave a recipe which I think he said was American; perhaps it is old—I don't know: to keep intoxicating fumes down if one must drink: "take, first, a wine glass of oil" that, of course, rises over the liquor—One of the party was an old sea captain and told the worst story, so the Colonel declared that was ever heard and appealing to me asked if ever I heard

\* Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1840-1904) made his last visit to Africa in 1897.



"so bad a yarn?" It was a bad story, even for a sea captain and I admitted that I never heard a worse except some that I myself had told

Stanley smiled again that angelic smile born of practice and of long years of observation—

The best told story of the evening was accorded me! You may see that we had a wretched time! However the Col said it was all right, and thereupon invited me to put up at Saunderson Castle and make that my home when I come to Ireland, which certainly I shall do<sup>15</sup>

Though more than two and a half years had elapsed since the start of the voyage, and though he had sailed tens of thousands of miles alone, the captain was still alive, still sailing. It was only to domesticity, comfort, safety, and many of the conventional usages of the land, that he probably was by now lost.

*The sloop was again doing her work  
...leaping along among the  
white horses...*

"FAR ON His Homeward Way," the *Boston Globe* trumpeted.<sup>1</sup> It was true. The captain's third Christmas out was spent on rough waters at the pitch of the Cape of Good Hope. While he was at the end of the bowsprit reefing the jib, the sloop, for a present, ducked him under three times. A passing English steamer, storm-tossed like the *Spray*, ran up the signal, "Wishing you a Merry Christmas."

A few days later, Slocum was able to beat his way into port, and anchor in the bay off Capetown. The voyage, he felt, was as good as done. The harbor-master promptly sent out a steam launch to tow the *Spray* to a more convenient berth, but the captain was not yet ready for that. He had weathered all alone the two great capes of the world, and now he wanted a day by himself, away from the bustle of the docks, just to think the whole thing over.

But the next day, without fuss or hurry, he went ashore, this time to stay three months. Leaving the *Spray* in drydock, he traveled far and wide through the South African colonies on a railroad pass furnished by the government. He went on personal business to Kimberley, Johannesburg, and the gold fields of the Witwatersrand.

As he rode across the plains of Africa, he was seized by "longing for a foothold on land."

At Pretoria, he shook hands with President Kruger.\* One of the party mentioned that their guest was on his way around the world. Kruger, who believed the world was flat, corrected him. "You don't mean round the world, you mean in the world," the old statesman said, and "glowered" at Slocum. Everyone was embarrassed, except the president and the circumnavigator. The last was delighted with "the nugget of information quarried out of Oom Paul . . ."

"It sounds odd to hear scholars and statesmen say the world is flat, but it is a fact that three Boers of considerable learned ability prepared a work to support that contention," Slocum wrote only in the serialized version of *Sailing Alone*. "While I was at Durban they came from Pretoria to obtain data from me, and they seemed annoyed when I told them that they could not prove it by my experience . . . The next morning I met one of the party . . . I bowed and made curves with my hands. He responded with a level, swimming movement of his hands."

Returning to Capetown, Slocum found the sloop waiting. Everything was in order. "The *Spray* seldom fell among thieves," he wrote. "At the Keeling Islands, at Rodriguez, and at many such places, a wisp of cocoanut fiber in the door latch, to indicate that the owner was away, secured the goods against even a longing glance.

\* Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger (1825-1904), president of the South African Republic for four terms, 1883-1900. He was known as "Oom Paul."

But when I came . . . nearer home, stout locks were needed . . .”

On 26 March 1898, he sailed from South Africa. Sixteen days later, early in the morning, the quack of a booby awoke him. “It was as much as to say, ‘Skipper, there’s land in sight.’” And there was—St. Helena, a speck in the South Atlantic. The captain reached for his bottle of port, and drank the health of his “invisible helmsman—the pilot of the *Pinta*.”

Slocum stayed ten days, following a pattern which by now had become almost routine; sight-seeing, lecturing, dinners with the governor, and then the farewell gifts of fruits and cakes. But at this departure he received, as well, a rather singular offering: a goat. The animal would be companionable as a dog, he was told.

Except for the first day out, before “the beast got his sea-legs on,” Slocum was not happy with his sailing companion. The goat “threatened to devour everything from flying-jib to stern-davits.” He was the “worst pirate” encountered on the voyage. One day, while the captain was on deck, the critter, in the cabin, ate the *Wes. Indies* charts. “Alas!” Slocum wrote, “there was not a rope in the sloop proof against the goat’s awful teeth!”

At the next port of call, Ascension Island, further west and further north, the passenger was discharged at once. Slocum made it 27 April. In spite of having shoved off alone, he had had a succession of fellow travelers: a Boston spider, a tree-crab, a rat, a centipede, a pair of crickets. But he had had no luck with any of them.

Slocum continued on his way alone. Passing by Fernando de Noronha, off the coast of Brazil, 8 May, the

*Spray* "crossed the track, homeward bound, that she had made . . . on the voyage out . . ." Though the captain was still in the South Atlantic, some four thousand miles from home, he had now encircled the world.

Sailing along the coast of Brazil, the captain was in the old familiar waters. He had but to follow where the *Liberdade*, ten years before, had sailed; or where the *Aquidneck*, earlier, had left her tracks. He had put a whole world between himself and those days, but only to come full circle. "Strange and long-forgotten current ripples pattered against the sloop's sides in grateful music . . . I sat quietly listening . . . while the *Spray* kept on her course . . ."

On 14 May, Slocum was in the Brazil current, making almost two hundred miles a day, and already north of the equator, when he saw a mast, "with the Stars and Stripes floating from it," he wrote, "rising astern as if poked up out of the sea, and then rapidly appearing on the horizon, like a citadel, the *Oregon*!"

The Spanish-American War had begun almost a month before, and on 25 April, President McKinley had admitted that a state of war existed. Though Slocum had heard rumors of war, he did not know war had actually come. Neither shooting nor shouting had been heard as yet in the South Atlantic islands.

The battleship *Oregon*, Captain Charles E. Clark, on the Pacific coast when hostilities began, had been ordered to join the Atlantic Fleet by moving from ocean to ocean through the Strait of Magellan. When Slocum saw her coming on, astern of his vessel, she was making a record-

breaking run for Key West. Later, she went to Santiago, and took part in the naval battle.

Laid down in 1891, the *Oregon* had a speed of 16 knots. Her displacement was 10,288 tons, little enough for a battleship, but still she was a thousand times the size of the *Spray*. As the battleship steamed nearer, Slocum saw her signals but could not at first make them out because *he had no binoculars*. However, when she passed ahead, he read her flags, C B T, meaning, "Are there any men-of-war about?" "No," Slocum signaled in reply and added, he had not been looking for any. The final signal, Captain Slocum to Captain Clark: "Let us keep together for mutual protection." But this, in Slocum's words, the commander of the *Oregon* "did not seem to regard as necessary . . ." Clark was prepared to encounter the Spanish Fleet which he thought was on its way to intercept him. Instead, he met up with the *Spray*.<sup>3</sup> When night came Slocum sat alone again, thinking how the *Spray*, having cleared all dangers of the voyage, might, at the eleventh hour, become a victim of war, ". . . but finally a strong hope mastered my fears."

From the *Spray's* logbook, 18 May 1898: "Tonight, in latitude 7° 13' N., for the first time in nearly three years I see the north star."<sup>4</sup>

Now the captain steered for the British West Indies, but sorely missed the charts the St. Helena goat had eaten. Finding himself among mysterious breakers, he had to rely on memory, and knowledge of the sea, and love of her who had brought him this far. Breakers almost boarded the sloop. "But you'll go by, *Spray*, old girl!" he

shouted in the night. She made it, and he "slapped her on the transom, proud of her last noble effort . . ."

Slocum reached Grenada on the forty-second day out from Capetown. A lion now, he promptly was waylaid by a reporter. The conversation, however, was brief for the captain was on his way to a meal on shore, "and was not altogether in the mood to be pestered by an interviewer," the interviewer wrote.<sup>5</sup> Slocum lectured at Granada; the hall was filled. He did the same at Antigua, further north among the islands.

On 5 June, he left the West Indies to sail for a United States port. It was the last leg of the voyage. "The *Spray* was booming along joyously for home now," making good time, when suddenly she struck the horse latitudes. There was not a breath of wind. For eight days the captain was becalmed. The sea was so smooth that evening after evening he could read on deck by the light of a candle. Under such circumstances, a less self-sufficient man might have been swallowed up in the solitude of waiting. But the captain knew "a philosophical turn of thought now was not amiss, else one's patience would have given out almost at the harbor entrance."<sup>6</sup>

The final calm of the voyage preceded one of the final storms. On 20 June, a gale was blowing, "accompanied by cross-seas that tumbled about and shook things up with great confusion." The *Spray's* rigging gave way. The jibstay broke at the masthead, and jib and all fell into the water, but Slocum managed somehow to rescue his gear. Then, with no one at the wheel to steady the vessel, the master of nautical legerdemain climbed the swaying mast and made the repairs.

But he was "tired, tired, tired of baffling squalls and fretful cobbler-seas." He had not seen a ship for days. "As to the whistling of the wind through the rigging," he wrote, "and the slopping of the sea against the sloop's sides, that was well enough in its way, and we could not have got on without it, the *Spray* and I; but there was so much of it now . . ."

On 25 June, Slocum was working along towards Fire Island, when a tornado struck which, an hour before, had swept New York City. He had seen it coming and was ready for it. The climax storm of the voyage he called it. Up to that point, he had been bound for New York, but when the storm was over, he hove the sloop onto another tack. Under short sail, she reached in for the Long Island coast, while Slocum "sat thinking and watching the lights of coasting-vessels . . ."

At that moment, a cabin boy on board a sloop about two miles to windward, and caught in the same storm, saw the yawl-rigged *Spray*. Many years later, he wrote: "We saw her start sheets and head in an easterly direction . . . Of course we did not recognize the *Spray* at the time, but later we realized that the little yawl we saw must have been the *Spray* from the fact that she carried not the customary gaff-headed sail but a balanced or 'standing' lug on the jigger. This sail was so rare in the United States—in fact, is so now—that the vessels carrying it can be numbered on the fingers of one hand."<sup>8</sup>

Slocum steered for Newport. The weather was fine and only one danger was left. Newport harbor was mined. But the *Spray*, hugging the rocks so as to avoid friend and foe, slipped in. At 1 a. m., 27 June 1898, she was safe in—



side, and the captain dropped anchor to end a voyage of more than 46,000 miles. He had been away three years, two months, and two days.

Still, according to Slocum, "the *Spray* was not quite satisfied till I sailed her around to her birthplace . . ." Neither was he, but for different reasons. "Now, my wish is to come back to New Bedford and Fairhaven, and to sail through the old bridge," he wrote the *New Bedford Standard*. "Is the old gateman there, still at the gate?"<sup>9</sup>

On 3 July, with a fair wind, the *Spray*, he wrote, "waltzed beautifully round the coast and up the Acushnet River to Fairhaven, where I secured her to the cedar spile driven in the bank to hold her when she was launched. I could bring her no nearer home."<sup>10</sup>

*Thus the voyage . . . was a natural outcome not only of my love of adventure, but of my lifelong experience.*

SO LONG as Slocum kept sailing, he found momentary solutions to the conflict in his nature. The unusual type of living enabled him to isolate and remove himself, and also to exhibit himself as humorously or boastfully as he needed to. It permitted him to express his gentleness and humble devotion, and also his violence and sensuousness.

After Virginia's death, he seems to have been unable to find a woman who could really accept his tenderness and warmer feelings. Instead, he lavished them on the *Spray*. By determination, and stubbornness, and love, he took possession of the boat, while the boat was taking possession of him. What they subsequently went through together helped satisfy the craving for fusion.

And then there was the sea, the sea which, from the beginning, had fascinated him so. For the brine-burnt seafarer, aging now, the earth was tolerable still because of its oceans. Cradled on the rocking waters, he found the harmony and serenity he strove for. In his way, he accomplished the desire to re-enter and be born again.

But, practically speaking, what problems had he re-

solved? The trip was over, and the ex-merchantman was some fifteen years past the high point of his career. Despite his courage, and faithfulness to calling, the pull of the down-hill run was relentless. There was no way to stop it.

The voyage was done, and Slocum had returned to the ways of houses and families, commonsense customs, and newspaper values. "Early yesterday morning," said the *Newport Herald*, "a staunch-looking little craft swung lazily into the harbor and cast anchor off Commercial wharf. She was a stranger in these waters and her rig . . . attracted the attention of the early risers . . . The solitary occupant of the boat busied himself in making everything neat and tidy aboard ship and appeared to be totally oblivious of the curiosity he was arousing. When the master of the craft had prepared everything to his satisfaction he jumped into a dory and sculled ashore."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing but the uncomprehending stare of idlers on the waterfront greeted the *Spray* and her captain. Stepping onto his native land, Slocum had to make himself known. His achievement had been completely blanketed by the Spanish-American War. The papers were too busy whipping it up to give much notice to a displaced merchant captain.

He could not make the front page, even in Newport. The *Boston Globe* put him on the last. New York papers gave him scant coverage, the *Times*, none at all. It is true that Slocum had not changed the course of history. But in his way, he had made a bit of it. He knew it, too. He had expected, and was ready for, a friendly demonstration. His nature was such that he needed it. But he did not get it.

His reception at home was quite different from those he had enjoyed in foreign, and especially in British, ports. Americans were wary of this tall tale. They knew the tradition of elaborate jokes and newspaper hoaxes. They had heard of travels in balloons, and expeditions to the moon. The solo circumnavigation was a fake, they said. But Slocum produced the *Spray's* yacht license, stamped in every port she had visited. After that, former confrères in the merchant service hinted that the ex-merchantman, coming from South Africa, was a diamond smuggler.

But some others were inclined to believe in the captain. Word got around, and within twenty-four hours there was a modest, but spontaneous, show of interest. The *Spray* "and her gallant skipper were visited by hundreds."<sup>2</sup>

No one hurried to Newport faster than Mabel Wagnalls. "The first name on the *Spray's* visitors' book in the home port was written by the one who always said, 'The *Spray* will come back.'" So the captain wrote, at the end of the narrative of the voyage.

He had carried Mabel's "musical story" around the world. Now he handed it back to her with an inscription: "A thousand thanks! Good wishes are prayers, heard by the angels. And so June 28th 1898 the little book, after making the circuit of the earth . . . returns . . . What ups downs *Miserere* you have had in your round! You have been twice through the Straits of Magellan; once off Cape Horn; you have seen Juan Fernandez, St. Helena and many more islands in the sea. The Cape of Good Hope . . . you weathered unharmed. Again you have lain quietly in your snug box, while the skipper whistled for wind or

spent a night on deck in the storm. For weeks and weeks, again little Book, no human voice has stirred the air to vibrate a chord among your leaves, and the only music you heard was the tune of the waves! You saw the lonely atoll in the midst of the sea where the waves lashing and with eternal roar spent their fury on its trembling rim . . . You have been read and re-read by the Captain . . . Henceforth little Book you will be in smooth seas while benefited old friend may still sail on. Farewell . . . J. S.”<sup>3</sup>

Though the words were addressed to a mildly Gothic romance, they composed themselves into a love letter to its author. This may, or may not, have been the captain’s intention. There is no way of knowing precisely what they were to one another—the sea-worn, literary sailor and the sheltered, piano-playing lady. One can only say that it could have been. They were gifted, imaginative, and word-minded people. Their relationship was based on a mutual need, the need for communication.

The *Boston Globe* said that upon arrival, the captain wired Hettie “at once.”<sup>4</sup> But she did not, or could not, get to Newport till the evening of the 28th. The *New York Herald* reported: “As she had three times mourned her husband as dead their reunion was touching.”<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps Slocum never would have done what he did if Virginia had lived. And perhaps he would not have done it if Hettie had been a different sort of woman. But when she refused to sail with him, then there was nothing he needed her for. He did not need her for cooking, sewing, care of children, nursing, literary advice, or sex. The companionship he required, she clearly was unable to provide.

In a way, he, like many others, had made history out of being unhappy at home.

And now it seemed that after having come around the world, the hero was, in every way, back at the starting point—except for one thing. Before he left Newport he got a telegraphed offer from the Century Company. It came from Richard Watson Gilder, poet, and editor of the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, and brother of Joe Gilder, the captain's friend. The latter had, of course, been following the progress of the voyage. So had Clarence Clough Buel, an assistant editor of the *Century*, and a yachting enthusiast. Slocum replied by telegram, and the next day, 30 June, he followed it up with a long letter on his special "Round the World" letterhead. He said he had not written for magazines before, but had "very decided literary tastes."

I have made a voyage such as, even, the emperor of Germany could not do and first building his [sic] own ship.

It has been, to me, like reading a book and more interesting as I turned the pages over I know what it all means and I know what *men* have said about it . . .

The story will keep. No one short of bone and muscle and pine knots will lower the record

The most interesting and instructive part is never touched by the daily reporters. I am misquoted by them till I am discouraged; for the public stomach *will* sicken . . .

If you were on the *Spray* I could show you, Sir, what interest has been taken in her voyage in foreign countries and especially by our British friends . . .

Without saying Slocum Slocum all the time—that I do not care for I know that the whole story will be hard to beat—My ship, essentially mine, is as tight today as the best ship afloat; her pump is dry enough for matchwood; not wormed not worn, my ship is as good or better than she was the day I launched her and I myself, I am ten years younger than I was the day I fell the first tree for the construction of my bark . . .<sup>6</sup>

This letter crossed one from the editor to the captain in which the former asked how much of the story of the voyage had been written for newspaper publication, and what there was to the rumor of diamonds coming in on the *Spray*. To the first question, the answer was, almost none. To the second:

I thought of bringing one diamond from Kimberly just to flash at the Goddess of Liberty as we sail up your harbor—the *Spray* and I, but I ~~did~~ not do even that

had I brought it I would have told the Customs of it I brought away their gold instead; To this I know there is no objection, on any hand

From Johannesburg also I brought gold enough to pay the old debts I made when I owned and sailed the bigger ship

. . . My vessel has in a cargo, tobesure, but clean open and above board.

I tried to make myself believe that I was sailing for the dollars I should make in trading. In this way I do ~~make~~ a dollar perhaps as much as Captains make ordinarily but the love of adventure has been, after all a potent factor to cary me beyond—This latter may

not appeal to the hearts of my countrymen so much as the dollars and cents . . .

I claim only to be one of the poorest of American sailors and having nothing else to do, made a voyage! . . .<sup>7</sup>

Almost from the minute the voyage was over, the captain felt desperately idle. And even while he yearned for a homecoming, he was dreaming of further conquests. His instinct to do, and to take command, was exacerbated by the war. He seethed with pent-up patriotism. Devotion to the sea mingled with intense desire to make his abilities count. "I burn to be of some use now of all times," he announced in a public letter to his friends and creditors in New Bedford. "I spent the best of my life in the Philippine islands, China and Japan . . . I am not fanatically suffering for a fight, but I am longing to be useful. Does Mr. McKinley want pilots for the Philippines and Guam?"<sup>8</sup>

Soon after he arrived in New Bedford, and anchored in the Acushnet River off Poverty Point, 3 July, his oldest and youngest sons came down from Boston. Victor was 26; Garfield, 15. Slocum was 54. "Vic," was the parent's greeting to his former first mate, "you could have done it, but you would not be the first."<sup>9</sup>

Local reporters went aboard. Though some were appreciative—one described the trip as "the most remarkable voyage ever attempted by any navigator"—Slocum, after tossing them his scrapbooks filled with clippings from foreign papers, seemed more interested in talking of what he would do, rather than what he had done. The prize was won, and now life put in its lesser claims again. "I am prepared to pay all my bills with the legal rate of



interest . . .” he said. Then, speaking of the voyage, he said that it “isn’t finished yet by any means . . . I intend to go to London before long.”<sup>10</sup>

He rested in New Bedford no longer than he had in many another port. And he lectured, for this was now his main source of income. When he had recruited himself and refitted the *Spray*, he sailed again, not for London—for no offers had come from that direction—but for New York. He went looking for business. He was frantic to be doing something. Hettie went with him. They found rooms in the city, “on a crosstown street on the lower West side,” Garfield recalled. On 5 August, the *New York Times* noted the captain’s arrival.

There was the offer from the *Century*, but writing was not the captain’s first choice. First of all, he was a navigator and a commander. The idea of a college ship, mentioned more than a year before in the letter written Joe Gilder, from Keeling Cocos, was still in the front of his mind. Such a ship would meet his requirements. It would be useful. It would have dignity and prestige. It might bring a livelihood. In any case, it would provide a platform and a command. People would have to sit up and take notice.

He explained the scheme before “a few friends,” foregathered in a room in Carnegie Hall, on the evening of 30 October. He proposed the building of a vessel patterned on a fine clipper ship, “with some improvements.” She was to accommodate 300 student-passengers for a two-year cruise of the world. The time was to be spent in study, work, and recreation. The object was to train young men as navigators “capable of handling and directing sailing

and steamships including men-of-war." He himself would teach nautical astronomy, the subject he had taught himself so well. Others would give instruction in seamanship, and engineering—and also in some of the liberal arts.

Slocum may have got the germ of the idea from the U. S. Coast Guard's floating academy, the bark *Salmon P. Chase*, which for many years was based at New Bedford. She had been built as a school-ship, and was in commission till 1907. But the captain's concept of a college ship went beyond the usual school-ship education.

There were to be advantages and attractions besides the strictly nautical ones. The student-passenger might, if he preferred, take the courses offered in literature, "and other of the higher branches." Also, the cruise was not to be for men only. The captain had not changed his views since the days when he wanted Virginia on board. In fact, he said he would have no part in his own project, "if women could not be included in its benefits."<sup>11</sup>

Nothing came of this plan. Thereupon, Slocum decided to charter instead of build a vessel. Wherever he lectured, he talked about the college ship—in Cambridge, Gloucester, and even in Concord, N. H. "Father tried to get a college professor, and people enough to pay for a voyage, but he could not get them. He was very disappointed," Garfield wrote.\*

\* Yet from both educational and practical points of view, Slocum seems to have been reasonably right. To this day, quite a number of school-ships are sailing, giving sail training to young men who would follow the sea. Very few, however, sail under American or British flags.

In 1955, Captain Irving M. Johnson, and his wife, of the brigantine *Yankee*, completed their sixth round the world voyage with a paying crew of college-age men and women. Slocum was a friend of Captain Johnson's father, Clifton Johnson. As a very young boy, Irving had seen Slocum in

So the high hopes failed. Slocum still could not get a command. He was still at rock bottom, only older now, and more of his energies expended. Well, as he had done once before at the end of a small-boat voyage, he would tell his story. He had not made any money writing, but he would try again. Perhaps what he wrote Richard Gilder would, after all, come to pass: "When my countrymen . . . have time to think it over they will not be shamed of the Spray . . ." <sup>12</sup>

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the Johnson home. But it was "the reading of his book," Captain Johnson told the present writer, "that gave me an urge to do something similar."

... to be taken into account were  
 some of years of schooling  
 where I studied with diligence  
 Neptune's laws...

SLOCUM WROTE *Sailing Alone Around the World* in 1899. It was published in monthly installments, with illustrations, in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, from September 1899 through March 1900.

Having undertaken to write his story, the captain, with Hettie, left New York to return to East Boston. In an undistinguished neighborhood, they doubled up with one of Hettie's sisters. Poor Hettie. What a life she lived! After twelve years of marriage, she still had no home. On 30 January, the captain wrote C. C. Bucl. "This is , report the Spray: My 'type-writer' and I are working along around Cape Horn now and will soon have some work ready to submit. Meanwhile the 'show' goes on . . . I am coming to N. Y. tonight for a week on the Spray."<sup>1</sup> It is likely that a cruise in northern waters in mid-winter seemed preferable to Slocum to a house and stove shared with in-laws.

By the end of April, he had to find another place to work, and so sailed to New York, where Mabel lived. He did not go, like Melville, to a hotel room to finish his

book. Instead, he sat in the cabin where five years before he had written *Voyage of the Destroyer*. Only this time the *Spray* was tied up at Erie Basin Drydocks, Red Hook, South Brooklyn.

"Magazine work, as you must know, is intirely new to me, the great Century being the first I ever tackled," he wrote the editors. Nevertheless, the work went on schedule. His method was "to know that I know, before I go ahead."<sup>2</sup> The sentences which gave him the most satisfaction were "the ones that just fell into place when I knew my subject . . . as I know the tides in the Bay of Fundy."<sup>3</sup> But if facility sometimes lagged, he had tenacity and discipline to fall back on. He had encouragement, too. Mabel liked what he wrote. She compared his writing with Defoe's.<sup>4</sup> It was she "who first read the manuscript of the Voyage," the captain wrote in her copy of *Sailing Alone*.<sup>5</sup> But whether she read it when finished, or while in progress, and where, is not known.

The captain delivered his manuscript in early summer, then sailed for Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Considerable revising remained to be done, but his publishers seemed to understand that even a literary sailor will sit in port just so long.

At Cottage City, on Martha's Vineyard, which he found "a charming place," he read the first batch of proof. From there, 28 July, he wrote:

I think I may be able to give the matter for the book many a touch which shall, when all will have been<sup>6</sup> done, make it not the worst marine story in the world

I am most anxious to see a clear story appear in

both Magazine and book with no superfluous matter . . .

But I find I must come to anchor and make a business of it if I hope to revise intelligently at all . . .

Be patient with me still . . .

And a few days later:

I am glad that my poor M S fell into good hands: In the Century it will appear far different to the ten fathoms of autograph which I first submitted to Mr Buel—how patient Century Editors have been!

I appreciate every touch of the pen given to my poor story Mr Johnson knows that I value also his exceedingly nice way of paying an old sailor a high compliment. Altogether, and best of all, I see my ship coming in under full sail freighted to the loadline . . .<sup>6</sup>

Editor and author worked harmoniously together. The captain took no extraordinary pains in his answers to publisher's questions, but scribbled his replies on the letter received:

Aug 8 99

*Dear Capt Slocum:*

When you shortened the rig of the *Spray* in Buenos Aires did you take in a topmast, or did you shorten the mast?

(Topmast was taken down at Yarmouth N. S.)

(Shortened mast 7 feet, bowsprit 5 feet at B A)

(Yes)

At the same time you shortened the bowsprit. Did you also shorten the boom, and to what extent?

(Shortened the boom inboard 4 ft at Pernambuco)

(Shortened the outboard 4 ft at Port Angosto)

At Port Angosto you put on the jigger. Did you shorten the boom again so as to bring it inboard?

(Yes at the outer end)

And did you *then* put on the stern brace to support the jigger? (No)

If that circular brace was put there earlier, when, where and why was it added to the Spray? (Put on stern brace at Rio to be ready for the mast.)

In the enclosed picture—the encounter with the great wave—the brace is shown—(It was there then) and the boom is as short as when she was yawl-rigged. (It should be four feet over the stern)

Isn't this all a mistake? When you see an error in a picture we want you to speak up—"and spoke it loud."

It was a pleasure to get your letter this morning.

Yours truly

/s/ C C Buel

Assistant Ed

(Oddly enough Mr. Buel: I was just rounding off some swearing about the Northern Light picture when your letter was handed to me . . . )<sup>7</sup>

Slocum also sent an undated letter, written between 8 and 12 August, in which he enlarged on some of his replies:

I should have mentioned that the jigger-mast which I shipped at Port Angosto was taken on board while at St Marys Bay where I found it among drift-wood on the beach. It was one of those 'hardy Spruce' saplings.

The boom projected over the stern till the jigger mast was stepped sufficient of the outer end, and then sawd off to allow it to swing clear—

This same boom was previously broken in the gale

off the coast of Morocco and was fished then, near the mainmast, The short broken end was removed at Pernambuco and the jaws refitted this brought the boom in about four feet but left some four feet still projecting over the stern untill she was refitted as before stated, at Port Angosto. It seems difficult—allmost impossible—to get marine pictures done nearely right

The Ship N. L. is made too stiff and is hogged, her stern droops, but in the degenerate state of our marine thes matters have been overlooked. The man who revives interest will deserve our prayers<sup>8</sup>

If editor Buel was something of a sailor, one gathers that editor Johnson was not. Robert Underwood Johnson, in the captain's words, "slaughtered, judiciously and liberally." His interest was in sharpening the narrative, while Buel pointed up the sailing. If, at times, Slocum's words rolled on in an almost compulsive talkativeness, in the use of nautical terms he showed nice restraint. The relationship between him and his editors seems to have been just right.

So long as he was working, Slocum was reasonably happy. He found association with literary men one of the pleasures of life.<sup>9</sup>

Though work was still to be done on the book, it was summer in New England, and Slocum was sailing. His publishers patiently corresponded with him here and there. From Fairhaven, 14 August, he wrote Johnson:

I find it rather difficult to condense the variety of experiences while sailing free over the smooth sea from Good Hope. It was all ripple ripple However the editor will know how to slaughter my pet so as to keep



the matter down to at least five installments But it is a rule, at Lloyds, that one cannot have too much of a good thing<sup>10</sup>

In Fairhaven, Mabel was on his mind. He wrote Buel about her. He had asked her to write a preface to his story, which she did. He recommended her to the Century editors as "a good writer clever and strong," but they had rejected her contribution. "The dear lady is broken hearted," Slocum explained to Buel. He added a joke that was perhaps not all joking:

I feel very sure that Mr. Buel will get me out of the difficulty . . . May I suggest without being officious, that our really gifted friend write a story of adventure? I'll go to Iceland or the North Pole if no other subject can be found to write about—and be glad of the chance—<sup>11</sup>

A few days later, from Onset, Massachusetts, he wrote Buel a slightly incoherent letter complaining that mail and proof were not being forwarded promptly. As though publishers and postmasters were used to the ways of a sailor. "From the empty clamshells of a watering place one can expect no better than I got at Cottage City," he commented. Hettie is with him on the *Spray*. Their address, till further notice, will be c/o Postmaster, Fairhaven.<sup>12</sup>

But by October, Captain Joshua and Hettie were back in East Boston, this time moving over to another of Hettie's married sisters. When the third installment of *Sailing Alone* appeared, he wrote Buel: "I am very proud of the company the *Spray* is in: Mark Twain's contribution

in November Century is the best thing he has ever done in his long life of good work . . . ”<sup>13</sup>

Not many would agree with that judgment, but *My Debut as a Literary Person* had a special appeal for Slocum. The piece told how Clemens, when a young journalist (journalism had attracted Slocum, too), had covered, in 1866, the burning of the clipper ship *Hornet*. Slocum probably remembered the incident. Clemens was in Honolulu when “the fifteen lean and ghostly survivors arrived after a voyage of forty-three days in an open boat through the blazing tropics, on *ten days* ration of food. A very remarkable trip; but it was conducted by a captain who was a remarkable man . . . He was a New Englander of the best sea-going stock of the old capable times—Captain Josiah Mitchell.” Clemens was first with the news. His story of the disaster in the *Sacramento Union* launched him, he claimed, as a “literary person.” As one contemplates Captain Slocum in the role of writer, it is interesting to recall that Mark Twain considered his experience as a river boat pilot the most important discipline of his life.

Once again, life with in-laws was not a success. Within a month, the homeless ex-merchantman was back in New York. He took a room at the old Hotel United States, which stood near the East River waterfront, on Fulton Street between Water and Pearl, within a short walk of the pier where the *Northern Light* had docked years before. From there, he wrote Buel: “I have to report . . . the most beautiful neuralgia experienced since Australia . . . I sent for Garfield to bile the tea. He is in charge, but if

this — thing keeps on in my bones I leave the town can't help it."<sup>14</sup>

He did not leave, but stayed to joust with the writer of the column, "Topics of the Times." The *New York Times* had let his voyage go unnoticed. But as the account of the voyage appeared month by month, the columnist, at least, was impressed. What beat him was not that one man alone should circumnavigate the earth in a sailing boat of his own construction, or that afterwards he should tell his story so well, but that he should have sailed in the manner he said he did. Could he really have lashed the helm and slept? Could the *Spray* have steered herself, so to speak?

Cautiously, the columnist got under way: "Interesting as undoubtedly are the articles in which Capt. JOSHUA SLOCUM is telling . . . of his voyage . . . there is lacking from them one thing the absence of which is a sore trial to the temper—and a somewhat severe trial to the credulity—of all of us who have or pretend a knowledge of matters nautical. Capt. Slocum repeatedly asserts that the *Spray* was so rigged that she both could and would steer herself, or, to paraphrase his statements more explicitly, that he could so arrange his sails and so lash his rudder that his boat would keep on her course all night while her . . . Captain . . . slept quietly in his cabin. The tale is painfully hard to believe . . . we won't say that the Captain has been treating the truth with irreverence, or even that he is honestly mistaken as to the *Spray's* intelligence. We will keep within a safe regret that he didn't reveal how the apparent miracle was performed. Queer things have been and will be done at sea . . ."<sup>15</sup>

Slocum, the day after reading the above, sent in his reply. On 11 November, the *Times* published it, dated, The Sloop Spray.

I am honored by a criticism from an old salt . . . It is possible that things occurred on the voyage of the Spray inexplicable to some mariners, even of vast experience, and I can only regret not having met them before the articles . . . were written so that I might have taken them on a sail in the Spray to demonstrate her prowess. As the matter stands, it is now out of my power to further elucidate . . .

This unpretentious sloop, built by one pair of hands, after circumnavigating the globe, is sound and snug and tight. She does not leak a drop. This would be called a great story by some, nevertheless it is a hard fact.

The story of the voyage is constructed on the same seaworthy lines; that is, it remains waterproof which your navigating officer will discover, I trust, if only he exercise to the end that patience necessary on a voyage around the world.<sup>16</sup>

Came the rebuttal. The columnist said he was "ready to believe almost anything about a ship or a boat, but belief and readiness to believe are not quite equivalent, and unfortunately, Capt. Slocum is not in a demonstrative or explanatory mood." He had consulted a contemporary writer of sea stories, long since forgotten, who said that he never knew of but one vessel that had the reputation of steering herself, and that was the whaler, *Edward Everett*. When on the Galapagos grounds, he had been warned to keep a sharp lookout for the *Everett*, as

in all probability she would have no one at her wheel. "Whether this reputation was deserved or not is beyond my knowledge," wrote the columnist.<sup>17</sup>

What with a reeking whaler dragged into the discussion, and compared to the tight little *Spray*, Slocum did not bother to reply further. Not much love was ever lost between merchantmen and whalers, or their respective followers. But this sort of criticism, which he had experienced nowhere else in the world, hurt the ego of the unemployed master mariner.

The *Times's* last word on the subject was not spoken till 6 March 1900, after the final installment of *Sailing Alone* had appeared: "A note at the end of Capt. JOSHUA SLOCUM'S narrative . . . promised, or seemed to promise . . . a supplementary article explaining how the Captain taught the *Spray* the difficult art of steering herself. That he really had accomplished this marvellous educational feat was asserted many times . . . Capt. SLOCUM declares that he sailed from Thursday Island to the Keeling Cocos, 2,700 miles, in 23 days, and in all that time stood at the wheel not more than an hour.\* We have no inclination to question the accuracy of his figures, but, *even* with the most favorable conditions of wind and sea, did the *Spray*, when left to her own devices, constantly keep on her course, as that phrase is commonly understood, or did she reach her destination along a zig-zag path, falling off and coming up as her head sails and those aft alternately got the better of each other? If the latter suggestion is true,

\* Concerning this leg of the voyage, Slocum wrote that he did not spend "more than three hours at the helm, including the time occupied in beating into Keeling harbor." (*Sailing Alone*, p. 211.)

how much simpler the Captain's explanation might have been made."<sup>18</sup>

An astonishing suggestion! As though one could sail around the world alternately falling off and coming up! But in yachting circles, the *Spray* became, and remains to this day, a controversial subject. Perhaps the genius of the man who sailed her can no more be wholly explained away than the success of the voyage can be denied. But that the *Spray*, when properly set on her course, could, under various circumstances, hold it, unaided by a man at the wheel, was confirmed, as will be shown later, by several friends who subsequently sailed with the captain. Slocum never invited on board those who challenged or criticized him. Clearly, he did not feel he had to prove anything.

Though the *Spray's* steering qualities are no longer questioned, her model and rig are still discussed. There are those who think that Slocum succeeded, not because of the *Spray*, but in spite of her. A writer for one of the yachting magazines warned yachtsmen against building copies of the sloop. He called her "the worst possible boat for anyone, and especially anyone lacking the experience and resourcefulness of Slocum, to take off soundings." The *Spray* has been compared to a Cape Cod cat-boat. That means, as anyone who has sailed the latter knows, that while extremely stiff initially, if ever heeled beyond a critical point, she would flop over as inevitably as the platter which she resembled.

But Slocum could not, if he had wished, choose between a boat with comfortable broad decks and initial stability, and one specifically built for deep water, with

less deck space but more of that final stability which rights a well-designed yacht even when knocked down with mast in the water. The *Spray*, a Delaware oysterman, was the only boat he had. L. Francis Herreshoff, son of the famous yacht designer, Captain Nat Herreshoff, wrote: "My father did not think much of the *Spray* but he had great admiration for Captain Slocum's ability to go around the world in such a poor vessel."<sup>19</sup>

Points such as these were appreciated later, when Slocum was dead. Yet, by and large, he enjoyed a nice share of recognition. If it seems small compared with that given later to some who hustled through the air, it is partly because, in the nineteenth century, the uncommon personality was not yet an uncommon occurrence.

*To young men contemplating  
a voyage I would say go.*

SLOCUM WAS not unreconciled to this world. But he traveled unimpeded by any great sense of that social virtue, resignation. For years he had managed the divided life quite well—involvement and escape, acquisitiveness and simplicity.

In December 1899, he went home, alone, to Westport on Brier Island. There in the village where he had got the little schooling he had, and his jumping-off place forty years before, he read the proofs of his forthcoming book. A couple of old schoolmates went up to Yarmouth to hear him lecture.

In February 1900, he rejoined his relation in East Boston, but in March he went east again. Indeed, at no time for the rest of his life was he able to stand still for long.

He was not only restless, but bitter because of the criticism he received at the hands of his wife's relations. He thought that others of his cousins might feel the same way. He was also dissatisfied at not getting what he considered sufficient returns on his talks. It irked him not to be as independent as his nature demanded. "He was capable of letting his irascible side show up if provoca-



tion was given or even suspected. One could not hide anything from a mind like his and small slights would rankle and never be forgotten or forgiven," a sympathetic relative wrote.<sup>1</sup>

On 24 March 1900, *Sailing Alone Around the World* was published in book form by the Century Company.<sup>2</sup> They and successor companies kept it in print till 22 June 1948. All told, there were seventeen printings, of which Slocum saw five. On 6 September 1951, rights in the book were released to the estate of Joshua Slocum, and subsequently assigned to Sheridan House, Inc. The latter, in 1954, re-issued the book.\* In 1956, Grosset & Dunlap reprinted from the same plates.

A break-down of the seventeen printings shows a small but steady demand. Between 1900 and 1948, 27,474 copies of the regular edition were sold, plus 16,200 copies of lower-priced Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., reprints.<sup>3</sup>

The early printings were bound in navy blue cloth with an anchor and sea horse stamped on the cover. There were 294 pages on heavy stock, gilded on the top. The price was \$2.†

Like the serialization, it was illustrated (using most of the same illustrations) by Thomas Fogarty and George Varian, two of the leading illustrators of the day.<sup>4</sup> Their work, like Slocum's, has won in the trial by time. It continues to evoke that flavor one thinks of as turn-of-the-century. Fogarty, who made most of the drawings, was a

\* With an Introduction by the present writer.

† Later printings were horribly scrimped as to stock, margins, and binding. Copies of the first edition have been quoted as high as ten times the original price.

true artist. His sketches of places he had never been, of actions he had never seen, are affecting. There is a mildness in the expression of his dream which invites the reader to dream a dream, too.

The Century Company went to work promoting *Sailing Alone*. They issued a nice four-page illustrated flyer in which reviews from various papers were quoted. First place was given to the comment of Sir Edwin Arnold, poet and journalist. He said of the captain's story: "The most extraordinary book, in its way, ever published. The adventure itself is by far the most courageous, sustained and successful enterprise of the kind ever undertaken by mortal man."

Slocum went to work, too. He got up his own one-page broadside. He quoted from friendly reviews from far-off places, Sydney and Natal, and he published a testimonial letter, "A Word From American Shipmasters of the Highest Standing." But he gave top billing to Mabel. She said: "'Round the world alone'—a mighty motto this; and in all the world's history it applies to only one man—Captain Joshua Slocum. Amid solitude and silence, with the keel of his little boat he has traced the great circle—the emblem of eternity."

The captain's frequent protestations of modesty reflect the constant struggle to control an opposite feeling. By the magic of pen and paper, he succeeded admirably in *Sailing Alone* in giving permanent form to the modest and soft-spoken man that he only sometimes was. A book is the place to romanticize one's self; letters, the place to let one's self go. In his first written comment on his book, he wrote Buel:

It is as you say: your artist has made a fine looking man appear to the gaze of all who turn over the pages of *Sailing Alone* to 235 But for all, his good looks, the skipper of the *Spray* like his accomplished editors prides himself more on winning ways!

The *Spray herself* appears in the frontispiece one feels while looking at her that one might step onboard there and sail on . . .<sup>5</sup>

All in all, Slocum reacted as most authors do. At first: relief and pleasure and self-infatuation as the manuscript goes to the printer. Then the book appears; it seems a bit of a failure, never quite fulfilling the hope. And finally the realization of the permanence of print overwhelms all other feelings. Also, according to conventional author behavior, he began to worry about what the papers would say. He wrote Buel:<sup>6</sup>

I expect I'll get fits if the Transcript "goes" for me but the man who gave me the note to the editor has marked the little work in his window: "The best Sea story ever written"! So much for Boston . . .

A friend introduced me to the editor of the *Herald* today who had lots of good things to say about the Magazine articles but, as far as I know had not said them beyond his own sanctum. Many think that I will get a house Monday

I'll give Bostonians beans if I dont, I'll give them beans anyhow, if I can

Enclose please find a couple of tickets to my show Monday 23rd.\*

\* The "show" was "A Sea Talk" at Tremont Temple, Boston, 23 April 1900, 8 p. m. It was advertised as illustrated with stereopticon views. Tickets sold from 25¢ to \$1. The following day, the *Boston Herald* re-

Two weeks later, he was still worrying:

I have heard nothing from the critics about my "fine writing" and hope to hear nothing.

If they'll only pass me this time I'll steer clear of like shallows in the future. I beg that the changes may be made in the plates especially on page 12

While I do not pose as a professional writer I should not leave a libel on the American Shipmaster

I was considerably interested in the story at the time of telling it and didn't see the enormous sunken ledges that I see now . . .

I have not gone critically over this child of the sea but after a cooling off I see at a glance many improvements which I shall be able to make in the text—a touch here and there. Doing so would be no more than the great author of *Ivanho* did. I wonder if another editions will be wanted wherein I may somewhat retrieve?"

But there was no need for concern. He had done his work well. The reviews were good, few of them as uninspired as that in the *New York Times*. The *Times* reviewer called the book "full of interest to lovers of adventure."<sup>8</sup>

The *Nautical Gazette* said of Slocum: "His voyage was interesting; his book is better." *Sailing Alone* was described as "a book of travel by sea that is well nigh perfect of its kind, the work of an artistic and therefore a master hand."<sup>9</sup>

ported an audience of "several hundred people. A cousin, Mrs. Fannie I. Maclean of Reading, Mass., recalling the captain on that evening, wrote the present writer: "He was in full evening clothes, was very much at ease, and very witty . . ."

The reviewer for the *New York Mail and Express* found a second reading "even more entertaining than the first, for it revealed many touches overlooked . . . and gave more opportunity to admire the way in which the story is told, as well as the story itself."<sup>10</sup>

The *Nation*, and the *New York Evening Post* employed the same reviewer, and used the same review. "Absence of literary finish and florid word-painting sinks into insignificance compared with the overwhelming impression his story conveys of dominant courage and placid self-reliance . . . With all the attention that was lavished upon him, his sense of humor was not diminished . . ." The reviewer proposed Slocum for the Hall of Fame which was about to be established.<sup>11</sup>

The notice in the *Nation* was read in London by R. B. Marston of Sampson Low, Marston & Co. He obtained the book and wrote Slocum: "I was laid up at home under orders not to read, but I began your book after breakfast, and sailed the whole of the 40,000 and odd miles with you before night, and wished for another 40,000 . . . We are Jules Verne's English publishers. Your fact is stranger than his fiction . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Sampson Low, Marston & Co. published *Sailing Alone* in the summer of 1900.<sup>13</sup> Sir Edwin Arnold reviewed it in the *Daily Telegraph*, 8 September. "No one, knowing the sea, and following Captain Slocum's narrative, would tolerate any snigger of suspicion, with which ignorant persons oftentimes accost great deeds . . . The tale is true from first to last, written in a style plain as a marlin-spike, and yet full of touches which show what hidden poetry and passionate love of Nature were in the soul of this 'blue-nose' skipper . . ."<sup>14</sup>

Slocum's book is one of those minor classics which gain poignancy and meaning with the passing of time. More than fifty years after its first appearance, it is read by the general reader as a story of resolute adventure and travel; by the amateur sailor, as scripture. Written in simple, straight-forward, felicitous language, it has worn like pure gold.

But there are also qualities in it not readily apparent to earlier generations of readers. In mid-twentieth century, it speaks of spontaneity, and the feeling for space, for some way out of a rapidly contracting world. In writing the story of the voyage, Slocum also wrote the story of who he was, and how he survived. Though he naturally had to suppress a great deal—for that was the stoic and ship-bred tradition; though self-revelation would have seemed to him weak, and even contemptible, he nevertheless wrote a self-revealing book.

The goal of individual accomplishment, and personal distinction, is clear. His book is both product and record of the struggle not to disappoint himself; and also the transcendence of the struggle. Beneath the outwardly conventional, simple-hearted manner, there emerges something other than a simple-hearted book. Stories of bolters and solitaires are seldom as simple as they seem. Only a mystic could have sailed as Slocum did. Only a Yankee trader could have understated the matter so eloquently.

By keeping the action always in focus, and not reaching out to the effects of the action, Slocum concealed from his contemporaries the inner form of his book. As a lecturer, he had found, so he wrote in a letter, that people "wanted to laugh—not cry."<sup>15</sup> However, at this remove, it suggests itself clearly enough. The hidden cry is in the

very words of the title. All his humorous nonchalance, his austere matter-of-factness, no longer disguise the repression of his longing for contact, and for the warmer feelings of life. He loved his calling, and he wrote of it with love.

While Slocum sailed onward, he also moved inward. Thus, his book corresponds to an ever-recurring mood, and he himself speaks to an ever-recurring condition.

Though his berth in maritime history is as certain as Noah's, he has, as yet, no place in the history of American literature. None of the standard reference works on literature includes him. Among critics, only Van Wyck Brooks has written his appreciation of him.<sup>16</sup>

J. Duncan Spaeth, who, for many years, taught American literature at Princeton, was so struck by Slocum's literary style that he went to see the captain and the *Spray* at Gloucester, sometime around 1900. Spaeth wrote: "I remember seeing an edition of Hakluyt's *Voyages*, well worn and evidently well read . . . on whose style Slocum's own was modeled . . ." <sup>17</sup> Spaeth included the captain in a recommended reading list.<sup>18</sup>

It is, however, very doubtful that Slocum used Hakluyt, or anyone else as a model. If he did, he himself was not aware of it. When asked how he had acquired his style, he replied: "I was not aware that I had any particular style; I certainly never studied to possess one."<sup>19</sup> Understandably, the style, like the experience, was a singular one.

Slocum had no literary theories. Unschooled, shrewd, and naive, a provincial world traveler, he stood apart from prevailing literary fashions. A master of sail, spiritually

displaced and isolated in his own time, he was, in fact, a kind of primitive writer.

Sailor, peddler, indefatigable teller of tales, Slocum seems the very embodiment of the legendary Yankee, going his own way and improvising as he goes, doing his own bargaining, making his own calculations, and always alone. In a sense, writing about the sea was only incidental to his Yankee predilection for writing about himself. Constance Rourke, in her suggestive study of the national character, pointed out that the persistent form of Thoreau's writing was the monologue.<sup>20</sup> She might have added that it was Slocum's, too; unrehearsed, spare, natural in lingo, personal in flavor.

Starting, not from Paumanok, but from North Mountain, Slocum might have been one of the mythical Americans of whom Whitman sang: "A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the limberest joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth . . ." <sup>21</sup> He was a veritable apparition of the type that became symbolic. Around 1900, at Lagoon Heights, Martha's Vineyard, he was seen at a clambake and shore supper with brothers, sisters-in-laws, and a handful of summer people. "He was above the middle height," one of the latter recalled, "wiry looking, brown beard, blue eyes. With a little make-up work, he would have been a ringer for Uncle Sam." And the young (at the time) summer resident remembered the typical Yankee mask of suppressed emotion. "Although the captain was a good mixer," he wrote fifty years later, "he also seemed like an extreme introvert." <sup>22</sup>

There is another element in Slocum's writing, and which also has to do with his early environment and its popular and oral tradition. In the middle of the nineteenth



century, a good deal of seventeenth-century English still was spoken by the everyday people of English-Scotch descent in rural Nova Scotia. King James English was a built-in feature of Slocum's language, and it did not come from much reading of the Authorized Version. Indeed, he never spoke of reading the Bible, and there is no indication that he had a copy on the *Spray*. Garfield wrote that his father sailed without one. Earlier in his career, when as captain of the *Northern Light*, and then the *Aquidneck*, certain of his duties required a Bible, he had borrowed Virginia's.

Slocum was a deeply religious man, but the harshness and narrowness of the religion he saw in his childhood turned him forever against creed, and whatever he thought smacked of cant. He was a man of his own kind, and he had his own way of expressing his adoration of the work of the hand of the Creator.

In 1903, Charles Scribner's Sons published an abridgment of *Sailing Alone*.<sup>23</sup> It was called, as once every schoolboy might have known, *Around the World in the Sloop Spray—A Geographical Reader Describing Captain Slocum's Voyage Around the World by Captain Joshua Slocum*. In a preface to the excised version, Slocum, characteristically, almost tells how it happened.

It was my good fortune, a short time ago, to be invited to the School of Pedagogy, in New York to meet Dr. Edward R. Shaw. Dr. Shaw was in the midst of a lecture when I entered the room . . . From this he turned to "Sailing Alone Around the World," which, to my surprise and delight, he quoted off the reel.

Here I met a large-hearted man at the right moment. He read my mind, or how else could he perceive

my desire to see the story of the *Spray's* voyage still more useful?

"With the leave of your publishers," said Dr. Shaw, "I will make the story of the *Spray's* voyage adaptable to school uses . . . Then we shall have a story of adventure and a lesson in geography all in one . . ."

In launching the new literary packet I desire to commend it especially to the indulgence of children around and all over the world.

J. S.

Professor Shaw, dean of the School of Pedagogy at New York University, had already "condensed for school reading with suggestions for correlation," *Two Years Before the Mast*, and *Robinson Crusoe*. He recognized that *Sailing Alone* belonged with narrative writing of that high order, and also that like Dana's book, and Defoe's, Slocum's could be read as a boy's book. It can be—if one wants to ignore what it is really about. What Professor Shaw, in his contemporary wisdom could not see, was that twentieth-century readers would find the saga of the middle-aged ex-merchantman considerably more interesting, psychologically, than Dana's youthful adventure, and almost as haunting and satisfying as the creation of Defoe.

Though well intentioned, and a wonderfully agreeable method for learning geography, the abridgment was a piece of American down-grading. It is as inferior to the original as its title to the true title. Even so, it reads tolerably well. Many people, reading it, thought they were getting *Sailing Alone*. That was partly the captain's fault. He got hold of copies and sold them without explaining the difference. He was not the man to let literary considerations interfere with commerce and trade.

*... with such as love sailing,  
mother-wit is the best teacher,  
after experience.*

WITH THE voyage almost two years behind him, Slocum still had nothing to do, no place to go. He wanted to exhibit the *Spray* and himself at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900, and his Century friend, Buel, tried to make arrangements. The sloop, however, was passed up in favor of something of historic interest, a Viking ship—not a real one, of course, but a model. By now, Slocum found it “perfectly natural” that the *Spray*, “which had sailed with simply one ‘Yank’ on board ten times the distance ever claimed for the Vikings . . .” should be rejected. “The event of her career is too new,” was his unhappy comment to Buel.<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly he was planning a trip to Iceland. It was something to do, and it was, perhaps, a chivalrous gesture in Mabel’s direction. At almost the same time, he was discussing a project for under-water exploration.<sup>2</sup> And he also applied for a billet as “second mate” on the “flying ship” which he hoped Samuel Langley soon would succeed in launching.<sup>3</sup> He did not know which direction to go in, but he was desperate for action.

In the winter of 1900, the *Spray* was again tied up at Erie Basin Drydock, South Brooklyn. Garfield was ship-

keeper. His father and Hettie were living in rooms in New York. "Father did not come on board the *Spray* much," Garfield complained, "did not come to inquire if I needed any food or if he could help me; was a mystery to me and will be to my dying day. I assume that he and Hettie did not pull on the same rope. Hettie was cool towards me. Father acted as though he wanted to be alone. One day he came and told me that we would cast off and get underweigh for Buffalo in the spring of 1901. He said the Pan-American Exposition would pay him for the privilege of exhibiting the *Spray*."

The captain bought, in Cos Cob, Connecticut, a 1½ horsepower marine engine, the equivalent in power of the smallest present-day outboard motor. Garfield wrote it was the first of its kind. Then he bought a clinker-built lifeboat, had it fitted to the engine, and had Garfield instructed in its operation. Thus Garfield was engineer on the craft which towed the *Spray* up the Hudson River to Troy, and through the Erie Canal to Buffalo.

Slocum could hardly have started before the middle of April. Usually, the ice has not melted till that time. The Erie Canal was widened and rebuilt over a slightly different course in 1918. But in the captain's day, it had changed very little since its opening in 1825.

For her inland voyage, the world-circling *Spray* had a crew consisting of Slocum, Hettie, and Garfield. "Father," Garfield wrote, "told me to hug the shore and he steered near the shore because the current running upstream helped. Every night we tied up to whatever we could find."

The Hudson, in its lower course, is a tidal river. From

New York Bay to Albany, 145 miles away, the fall is only five feet. When the *Spray* arrived there, reporters went aboard. Garfield wrote that at this time his father did not like reporters; in fact, "hated publicity."

Since his days on the *Northern Light*, almost twenty years earlier, the captain had sat for a good many thumbnail sketches, and though some reports had been careless, or slanted to make the nonconformist appear merely queer, American newsmen, by and large, had not done too badly by Slocum. Furthermore, he had wanted and enjoyed the notice, and, indeed, sometimes could hardly have functioned or made a dollar without it. Now, however, the reporting was becoming more flippant and disrespectful. It hurt Slocum's pride and added to the sense of frustration he was feeling. He felt criticized, and was unable to cope with the criticism. His handwriting, after 1899, shows him insisting on details, patching up tiny places of fading ink as if he could not countenance the slightest failure.<sup>4</sup> There was a deepening of the changes already in motion.

At Troy, six miles further up the river, the two masts were taken out and lashed on deck. On entering the Erie Canal, Slocum remarked to Garfield: "This is the roughest water I ever sailed on." Garfield added that when they reached Buffalo, all hands were well, no one seasick. He said that the *Spray* attracted a great deal of notice, both along the way and when placed on exhibition.

The Pan-American Exposition opened 1 May and ran till 2 November. Whatever the real purpose of its promoters, it was advertised as a celebration of progress in the Western hemisphere.<sup>5</sup> This was the progress-proud nineteenth century. To find Slocum there—an anachronism

in time—seems a truly ironic touch. Few men are more conservative than those who build and sail boats. But the irony was probably lost among the curiosities, oddities, eccentrics, freaks, and advertised artistic and educational features of the sprawling, exuberant, and tasteless show.

It was held in Delaware Park, a 365-acre tract, including a 46-acre lake, and adjoining a tributary of the Niagara River. To reach the park lake, called Gala Water, the *Spray* had to be hauled out and raised in a sling which the captain devised from a hawser, loaded onto a dray drawn by four horses (Garfield on board all the while), and finally launched in the lake by means of a cradle Slocum built on the spot. And there she remained six months while tourists were urged "to shake hands with the gallant captain, a man of stout heart and steady nerve, a veteran of the salt seas, and a man of mighty soul and character."<sup>6</sup>

While the captain rode at anchor between the Triumphant Bridge and the dazzling Electric Tower with its thousands of lights, forty-two Indian tribes were whooping it up in the Stadium. Beneath the dome of the Temple of Music, the band pounded out the Latin-American rhythms of Victor Herbert's *Pan Americana*. On the Midway, sight-seers gaped at fur-clad Eskimos in imitation ice igloos, South Sea Islanders in native dress, South American hidalgos, hula-hula dancers, large-headed dwarfs, the infant incubator, and Chicquita, The Human Doll.

A visit to the *Spray* competed with A Trip to the Moon, or the Streets of Mexico and spurious bull-fighting; the Old Plantation with banjo-strumming singers, the Hawaiian Village, the Beautiful Orient, the Scenic Railway, the Magic House of Mystery, the Wild Animal Show, and Alt

Nuremberg. Scenes of the Spanish-American War were re-enacted. U. S. Cavalry Troops reproduced Custer's Last Charge. There was an Indian who impersonated Geronimo, the Apache chief; a lady who interpreted Cleopatra.

Slocum had only himself and the boat, and Hettie and Garfield to exhibit. He answered the visitors' questions, and autographed and sold his books: *Sailing Alone*, \$2; *Voyage of the Liberdade*—he still had a few copies—\$1; and a neat 48-page booklet, *Sloop Spray Souvenir*,\* 25 cents. After all, like Buffalo Bill, his fellow-exhibitor at the Exposition, and other American heroes who had undertaken valid adventures, his defiance was petering out in side shows.

In the *Sloop Spray Souvenir*, Slocum made use of the sail stripped from the boat when she first nosed out of the Strait of Magellan and into the Pacific, five years before. Opposite the title page, he tipped in a bit of the stained canvas. On the title page itself, beneath the title, the captain had printed, "Arranged and Supplied with Notes By Henrietta E. Slocum." Using Hettie's name, but his own style, he described the *Souvenir*—and himself:

"A collection of reviews of the Spray's famous voyage around the world, from leading journals, with something tangible of the Spray herself—namely, a piece of her original mainsail, which was torn, beyond repair, in the gale off Cape Horn, 4th to 8th of March, 1896,—a fierce tempest!

"Admiring friends of the Spray, visiting her with jack-knives, first and last, by their keen appreciation of souvenirs, suggested the preparation of this memento . . ."

But even now, as he reread and gathered together

\* Now as scarce as a chapbook which, physically, it somewhat resembles.

words of sympathy and praise, he could not forget his detractors and disbelievers, nor disguise the hostility he increasingly felt. Hettie, in the pamphlet, is made to tell how, when he was sailing across the Indian Ocean, and for many months was not heard from, some with little faith gave him up for lost; and how, when long after, the captain read the premature obituary, he said: ". . . they did not speak of my virtues when they had me on the other shore." This was, of course, a reference to Hettie's relatives, if not to Hettie herself. Then, still attributing the words to his wife's pen, he wrote for Mabel: "It is interesting to know that among Captain Slocum's nearest friends . . . some one always said, 'The Spray will come back.'"

Slocum was probably on the Exposition grounds when President McKinley was shot on 6 September, in the ornate Temple of Music. It was there that Theodore Roosevelt took the oath of office. McKinley had signed the *Spray's* visitors' book, Garfield wrote. Pan-American tourists, all told, filled three volumes.

Some time in the autumn, Slocum left. He sold the lifeboat to a local fisherman, as he had devised for himself a quieter source of power. And besides, Garfield, the engineer, had taken a job.

The papers noted the captain's departure: "Horse is Capt. Slocum's Sail/ Navigator of the Spray Weighs Anchor and Sets Off Down the Raging Erie Canal./ Is Going to be a Farmer/ Hand Which Held the Tiller is Soon to Hold the Plow—Satisfied With His Exposition Experience."

"With an old work horse for a sail, the Spray sailed down the Erie Canal yesterday afternoon in the general



direction of the Hudson River. Capt. Joshua Slocum was standing on the deck, bidding a farewell to Buffalo and all that is left of the Exposition . . .

"No Whistling For a Breeze.

" 'You see,' explained the captain, 'it don't make much difference which way the wind blows we get there just the same. No, I didn't have the horse sharp shod. The canal don't go over many hills between here and the Hudson.'

"About the time the horse will be all in the good sloop will reach Troy, then Capt. Slocum, thoughtful man that he is, will entice the horse aboard, set real sail and glide down the Hudson and through the Sound as far as Martha's Vineyard.

"The Spray has lain in the Erie Canal at the foot of Ferry Street since the night that the waiter turned the hose on the crowds at Pabst's on the Midway.

"The horse that furnished the motive power to run the sloop down the canal will furnish the power to run a plow on the captain's farm in Martha's Vineyard. The hand that steered the tiller of the Spray will steer the plow; the voice that refused to allow a woman to accompany him across the Atlantic will say 'gee-up' to the horse, when it comes plowin' time . . .

" 'Yes,' concluded he as the sloop pulled away from Ferry Street, 'I got two-thirds of the money owed me by the Exposition Company. I met fine people, was treated well, and considering everything, am satisfied.' "8

Garfield's last word on the Pan-American was: "I wonder how father steered the horse. He did not write to me and tell me about his return trip."9

. . . beware of reefs day or night,  
or, remaining on the land,  
be wary still.

WITH EARNINGS from the Exposition, lecturing, and royalties from his book, Slocum was now able to buy what he thought he wanted, certainly what Hettie wanted: a home. Nearly ten years earlier, at the end of the voyage of the *Destroyer*, when the promised Brazilian pay seemed within his grasp, he wrote: "I began to think of the little farm, which so many years ago I promised myself. I say now, I could almost hear the potatoes growing—but not quite."<sup>1</sup>

Garfield wrote that his father said that if he settled down, it would be in the Hawaiian Islands, for he liked the climate. But when the time came, he chose, instead, a New England island, Martha's Vineyard, where some of his sisters and a brother lived, and where he was not altogether a stranger.

From Buffalo, Hettie went straight to relatives in East Boston. The captain and the *Spray* took their time. "I am prospering fairely well. I hope all my friends are enjoying fair wind," he wrote Buel, 3 February 1902, from Washington, D. C.,<sup>2</sup> which was not exactly en route between Buffalo and Massachusetts.

On 1 March, the *Vineyard Gazette* reported: "Capt.

Slocum who has the fame of going around the world the world [sic] in a sail boat has purchased the residence and lot formerly owned by the late John Manter. Also other land of Samuel E. West, so as to have enough for a small farm."<sup>8</sup> The cost of the property was \$305.\*

The village of West Tisbury, where the captain settled, is about in the center of Martha's Vineyard, away from the sight and sound of the ocean. In Slocum's day, it still was favored by whalemens trying to forget the thirty and forty month voyages. Farthest inland of any of the island's settled places, it is generally level, its soil adapted to farming.

Slocum's little house on the Edgartown Road, still sturdily standing—still shingled with the shingles he is said to have brought across Buzzards Bay in the sloop—is next door to the big house where Captain James Cleaveland, one of the Vineyard's prominent whalers, lived. For a while, the captains lived side by side. A Cleaveland grandchild wrote:

"Capt. Slocum lived in . . . a very old, small Cape Cod house and added a section without regard to architectural unity, put a curving Japanese-temple type of roof over the front and beside the door the usual shells and chunks of coral of the seafaring man.

"My grandfather used to entertain a great many interesting men in the kitchen. I remember his bringing Capt. Slocum into the front part of the house and my aunt greeting him and saying to me . . . 'This is Capt. Slocum who sailed around the world in the sloop Spray.' As I remem-

\* The next year Slocum bought three additional tracts, a piece of woodland for \$200, the others for "\$1 and other considerations."

ber, he was a small wiry man, bald, with a pointed beard and very bright, small, piercing dark eyes . . .

"Mrs. Slocum used to stay with us occasionally. She was quite firm in her determination never to go to sea with her husband again . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Garfield wrote that his father bought the old house because he liked the large timbers, and the knees which looked like the hold of a ship. So far as the farm was concerned, he planned to raise fruit trees.

The captain began his new work with gusto; farming must have brought to mind his earliest days. He was working in his garden when Clifton Johnson came over from Hadley to photograph and interview him. Johnson was an illustrator and author who believed that in Slocum he had discovered a great contemporary. It had been a long time since a thoughtful man had shown any interest in him, and Slocum responded warmly. Before the two men met, they exchanged letters. "Then you have heard of the old Spray and Sailing Alone," Slocum wrote. "She is a knowing old boat and it's great fun sailing her. Would you like to take a spin in her?"

The captain wrote a second time:

WEST TISBURY MASS  
Sept 21st-02

. . . We will be able to put you up at our old ranch and be glad of the opportunity to do so—if you will take pot-luck with us.

\* One of the captain's jokes. The true name he gave the place was *Fag End*, so Hettie told the present writer.

My son Victor—just home from a whaling voyage—is helping me repair the shack. He is quite a sailor. Altogether we may fit the *Spray* on a voyage when you come. Please keep the lecture enterprise in view . . .<sup>5</sup>

After his visit, Johnson wrote up Slocum for *Outing* magazine. For the biographical part of his article, he had to depend on the captain, and so he got scant pickings—no dates, few names or places, not a word of Virginia, dead eighteen years.

But when it came to the testimony of his eyes, Johnson was able to do better. "The *Spray*, as I first saw her," he wrote, "lay gently rocking in a little cove on the Massachusetts coast near Woods Hole . . . There were other vessels about . . . The *Spray* could not compete with them in grace and style, yet she had an attractive air of domesticity and was evidently built for a sea home suited to all seasons and all waters and not simply adapted to fair summer weather along shore. It was a pleasure to set foot on her and note her snug appointments. It was a pleasure to eat with Captain Slocum a rough and ready lunch that he deftly prepared in the little galley, and it was a pleasure when night came to bunk under a deck awning and sleep on board. But, best of all, was a sail the next morning in 'the old *Spray*,' as her owner affectionately calls her, from the mainland across to Martha's Vineyard . . .

"His house is one of the most ancient on the island—an oak-ribbed ark of a dwelling with warped floors and tiny window panes and open fireplaces. Its aspect is at present rather forlorn and naked, but the captain knows how to wield the hammer and the saw, and will soon make it snug. In a single season he has become an enthusiastic

agriculturist, is proud of his flourishing garden and would like to own and make fruitful all the land round about . . . Martha's Vineyard looks to him like Eden, and it is likely the sea will know him no more . . ."<sup>6</sup>

Johnson saw Slocum in the first fine flush of farming. Garfield wrote that though he himself spent three years on the island, he did not help his father, and that all he recalls of the captain's agricultural efforts was the setting out of fruit trees.

The captain's brother, Ornan, helped, although, according to a relative, he was not a strong man and the captain had small patience with him. Despite constant bickering they worked together till the day when Ornan, while cultivating, ran (or let the horse run) against the trees. This barked them up and enraged the captain. He swore that Ornan was trying to wreck his beautiful young trees out of sheer cussedness. Ornan left, and he and the captain did not see each other again for some time. Then, one day, they met on a narrow path. They were ready to pass, eyes straight ahead, when Ornan thought what a couple of fools they had been, so he gave his brother the shoulder, and spinning him half way around, shouted with a grin, "Good morning, Captain!" So the incident ended happily enough but, as a relative commented, Ornan did not play Cincinnatus with Captain Slocum again.<sup>7</sup>

In the spring of 1903, the *Vineyard Gazette* reported that Slocum, in addition to his homestead, had purchased "a large wood lot and about 160 acres of cleared ground."

As is often the way with an enterprising but untried farmer, he tried to grow something new—in this case, hops. Mrs. Donald Campbell of West Tisbury recalled picking

hops for the captain when she was a girl. But only once, for he did not repeat the experiment. He was, she added, "tall, spare, courteous, and reserved."

Reports had it that the barn on the old Pease place was filled, not with crops, but with shells: coral, star fish, sea fans, enormous white clam shells with fluted edges, odd scallop shells, and others—brought home to give away, sell, or as ballast.

In his second summer on the farm, instead of making hay, Slocum went sailing on Buzzards Bay, and Vineyard and Nantucket Sounds. A certain Edwin Robinson of Wentworth, New Hampshire, wrote that he saw the *Spray* hauled out at Onset, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1903; that he saw her again that summer at Cottage City, and rowed over to her. "Capt. Slocum was giving a young man a lecture on the proper way to come alongside an anchored boat without smashing up things. The captain said business of selling shells was slow but that he was going to stay around for a few days longer anyhow."

Dr. Charlotte Richmond of Amherst, Massachusetts, saw the captain in the summer of 1903. "Capt. Slocum spent many weeks at Marion and my mother used to send me out in the rowboat with food supplies for him. In time I grew to regard him almost as a good uncle, a teller of wonderful tales, and a giver of many interesting small gifts," she wrote.

When harvest time came, Slocum, instead of drying beans at home was hooking a shark at the Sippican Casino at Marion, "greatly to the relief of the bathers," the *Vineyard Gazette* reported.<sup>8</sup>

By 1902, paying lectures had become few and far be-

tween. Of course he could always give away a benefit lecture, as he did in his newly adopted town in a rugged old hall. On 20 November, the West Tisbury correspondent exhorted *Gazette* readers: "Do not forget the lecture at Agricultural Hall on Thursday evening by Capt. Slocum entitled 'A Tour Around the World.' A rare treat is in store for our people." Perhaps Slocum gave them, as he penned on one of his circulars, "100 slides of places visited and of peoples met with on the voyage, savage and otherwise."

Johnson got his brother, Henry, of Johnson's Bookstore, Springfield, Massachusetts, to act as the captain's lecture agent. In December, Slocum lectured in Springfield, but the Slocum style of lecture had about run its course.

Earlier, for a short time, he had been booked by the Lyceum Bureau of New York, and the leading impresario of the day, Major James B. Pond (1838-1903). For twenty-five years, Pond had handled all the big names, from Mark Twain, Cable, and Whitman, to Stanley, Peary, Henry Ward Beecher, and William Dean Howells.

In his entertaining and enlightening book, *Eccentricities of Genius*, the major explained that Slocum was born too late. Pond's own eccentricity was exaggeration, but his description of the captain's predicament, and, incidentally, his own, seems heartfelt enough.\*

"Capt. Joshua Slocum, who conceived the idea that he could sail alone around the world, is about the newest and most remarkable of the small list of hazardous adventurers

\* Mark Twain to William Dean Howells, 25 January 1900: "If you got half as much as Pond prophesied, be content and praise God—it has not happened to another. But I am sorry he 'ldn't go with you, for it is marvelous to hear him yarn . . . his mill is never idle . . ."



who have *done something that no other man has succeeded in accomplishing*, and thereby acquired world-wide fame . . .

"What is most remarkable of all is that Captain Slocum is able to write and describe the incidents of the entire voyage and his wonderful experiences in a manner so graphic and simple that it absolutely charms and fascinates his hearers as few ever did or ever could do . . .

"It is wonderful to listen to the descriptions of some of his hairbreadth escapes and to hear him answer, as quick as a flash, questions of every conceivable sort put to him by expert seafaring auditors. I have listened for hours to these seeming tournaments in navigators' skill, and never yet did the captain hesitate for an instant for a reply that went straight to the mark like a bullet . . .

"Had all this occurred twenty years ago, it would have meant a fortune for Captain Slocum, and a stimulant for the lyceum such as it is impossible to secure under present conditions. 'Because why?' you ask. Because under the present conditions, lecture courses are forced upon the communities by agents representing various lecture bureaus, who . . . round up a committee of enterprising citizens who want to do something for the town, and persuade them to go on a guarantee fund to secure a course of lectures and entertainments . . .

"So when the newspapers . . . publish the accounts of such heroic adventures as Captain Slocum's, and a circular is sent out announcing his intention to relate from the lecture platform for the enlightenment of the public the story of his adventures, this local guarantee committee informs the captain that they already have 'a course' in

their city, which means that an independent lecture or entertainment of any kind, no matter how meritorious, is boycotted by the local committee in every city in the Union of from 2,500 to 40,000."<sup>9</sup>

Again, it was the same old story. Slocum planned to settle down with Hettie, but it just did not work out. His Eden was much like any other man's, that is, soon lost. Throughout the winter of 1902-03, the West Tisbury correspondent of the *Vineyard Gazette* reported him in Boston, Washington, New York, North Carolina.<sup>10</sup> There were rumors that the *Spray* might be shown at the St. Louis Fair, and even that the captain would return to Australia.<sup>11</sup> Neither came to pass, of course.

In ten years with the *Spray*, Slocum had managed to work himself out of debt. At last he and Hettie had a house of their own. For a moment, fortune's tracing appeared to be leveling off, and even moving up. But actually, the direction had not changed at all. The captain still was living without central purpose.

*Dangers there are, to be sure . .  
but the intelligence and skill God  
gives to a man reduce these  
to a minimum.*

THE TRAGEDY which overtakes some adventurers, once they get to the top of the adventure, is that they cannot really come down. Ordinary living is no longer possible. They are doomed to go on adventuring.

Slocum was adrift. He wandered in and out of his friends' and neighbors' lives. Each saw him in his own way, and remembered him as he saw him.

A relative in Boston recalled that one day the captain popped in unannounced, "by way of the kitchen," she wrote, "with an enormous cod tucked under his wing with just a paper around its middle but the tail sticking out, and part of the other end where the head was happily off." Slocum had been up and down the waterfront, seeking out old acquaintances, and one of the fishermen had given him the specimen of his favorite food.<sup>1</sup>

While constantly holding himself in check, the captain's warmer side found some outlet in witticisms, occasional sentimentality, and spells of sociability.

He told Clifton Johnson that when visiting his friends, he was often asked to make a chowder; "and when I do

get up one of my proper old-fashioned codfish chowders it brings them right to their feet," he said. "Why they were invalids before!" He said his method was so simple, and gave such appetizing results.

"Put some pork and a sliced onion in the pot and let that cook awhile," he explained to his admirer. "Then put in a layer of potatoes and next a layer of fish, and so on up to the top with a seasoning of salt and pepper. Then add enough water to barely cover it and cook for twenty minutes. When it is about done put in milk and bits of crackers or bread and let it simmer a while. Your codfish must be cut in chunks and you must have the skin on it and the bones in it."<sup>2</sup>

After 1904, Slocum spent little time on the farm or the Vineyard. George G. Gifford, storekeeper and town clerk of West Tisbury for many years, recalled the captain as "not extremely tall nor extremely short, but a quite pleasant chap who talked with everybody. It was the general opinion," the storekeeper said, "that Slocum and his wife had separated—nothing legal—but just that he went his way and she went hers."

Another neighbor, Horace Athearn, called Slocum well-spoken and courteous. He described him as "a broad but lean and high-shouldered man who wore a close-cropped beard and was a great walker." According to Athearn, the peripatetic captain explored the whole island.

Still another Vineyarder, S. C. Luce, Jr., recalled the captain as slow moving and slow talking, "but," he said, "Slocum's head worked all right." Donald Campbell had a contrary impression. He thought Slocum's mind had

been affected by the loss of the *Aquidneck*. Another resident of the village recalled the captain as "eccentric."

Joseph Chase Allen said that he knew Slocum the way a boy knows a man, that during the years Slocum was at the Vineyard, he (Allen) lived in Chilmark with his uncle, Fred Mayhew, who drove the stage coach. "I remember driving down with him one evening to meet the boat," Allen said. "The stage was just like a box and not too well made—all windows and doors. For the return trip, a rather well dressed woman took the middle seat and then a man got aboard and took the seat clear aft in the doggone box. I was up on the front seat with my uncle—we were headed up-island in the usual way—when all of a sudden I heard a hell of a rustle of paper. The man leans forward and says to the woman, 'I hope you don't object to the smell of salt codfish.' I looked around and he had the biggest jack-knife I ever saw in my life, and he was hewing chunks off the fish, and eating, and he ate a good deal of the way to West Tisbury. That was Slocum in 1904.

"He looked a lot like other men of his generation who had been to sea—whiskery, very quick in his movements, and inclined to be snappy in his speech as men will be who are accustomed to give orders. He was not the kind of man one would be tempted to take liberties with. Only the women didn't think too highly of a man who stayed away from home so much without any particular objective."

Allen was also able to recall the *Spray* tied up at Menemsha Creek, seven miles up-island from West Tisbury. He said that the captain carried a small round bottom boat in the alleyway, "chock full of all kinds of junk,"

and alongside the companionway, a Chinese gong and beside it, a wood hammer hanging from a silk rope. Allen said the captain's topping lift\* was a very white native grass rope, and that a coil of the same kind of rope lay on one of the houses.

Actually, on the Vineyard, Slocum's brother, Ornan, was the better known of the two. Having forsworn the sea, and being naturally closer to the run of mankind, Ornan had the time and inclination for the gregarious life. He lived to a very old age, and liked to tell stories about his brother.

It seems that one day he and Slocum went sailing in the *Spray* out of Vineyard Haven. The captain set the course too close to the rocks around West Chop. Ornan, who was at the wheel, warned that they were in danger, but his brother was calling the orders. When, finally, Slocum realized that he really was in too close, he shouted in a voice like the last trumpet, "Hard over!" Ornan responded with such sudden and vigorous action, that the captain fell full length on the deck, flat on his back. That was too much to take from Ornan. The captain rang to his feet and made for him, but Ornan stood his ground. "Now wait, Josh, you gave the order and I obeyed," he said. Slocum admitted it. Then Ornan, so the story goes, pressing his luck, added: "Josh, I'm a happy man this day. All my life I've wanted to land you on your back and now, by gum, I've done it."<sup>3</sup>

In his brief career as farmer, the captain could not have made any money. It is much more likely that he lost.

\* A rope and block by which the outer end of a boom is hoisted or supported.

In the summer of 1905, Hettie began to take paying guests while the captain lived a more private life in the sloop off the coast of Maine.

At the end of August 1905, Slocum was reported back home after a six months' leave.<sup>4</sup> On 21 September the *Vineyard Gazette* said, "Capt. Joshua Slocum, accompanied by Mrs. Slocum, has been out on a fishing expedition in the sloop *Spray*." Apparently, Hettie was trying once more to become a seagoing wife; the captain, to become a fisherman. But the life was wrong for Hettie, and Slocum was wrong for fishing. There was something about him that could not fish. Either he did not know how, or he anchored where there were none. A week later, when he turned up in Newport, Hettie had been replaced by a cat.

"There is nothing fancy about this animal," a newsman reported, "no pedigreed feline, just plain cat, but it makes a good companion . . . His (Slocum's) boat is his house, and he spends most of his time in her . . ." After renewing his license as a master mariner, the captain told the inquiring reporter that he was bound west to pick up his wife for a winter in southern waters.<sup>5</sup>

However, so far as Hettie was concerned, the plan to go south on the *Spray* fell through. In October, she and the captain made separate trips to Boston which resulted in their making separate arrangements. The next month, the West Tisbury correspondent announced: "Mrs. Joshua Slocum has gone to Boston and expects to remain there most of the winter."<sup>6</sup>

The captain had already left home and gone to Menemsha Creek where the *Spray*, reliable always,

waited.<sup>7</sup> Past sixty now, but obsessed as ever, he was still making plans. Only first, he had an old piece of business to attend to.

For sixteen years, the *Liberdade* had been gathering dust in Washington, in the Smithsonian, and as the Institution's collections had been growing rapidly, the 35-foot "canoe" was very much in the way. As far back as 1900, Slocum had written the curator that he was coming to fetch it; that he wanted to take it as well as the *Spray* to the Pan-American Exposition.<sup>8</sup> Five years later, in June 1905, he wrote again:

The *Liberdade*, as a boat, has gone . . .

If the old thing might be all sawd apart and bundled in some corner I would gladly send the amount of the cost and as soon as possible get the bundles away. If not, let the executioner do his work. I think you have been exceedingly patient and have been a friend . . .<sup>9</sup>

Now winter was coming. The captain was getting ready to sail, and the matter of the *Liberdade* was not settled yet. Though a few months before, he was ready to take it apart, he now was anxious to keep it intact. He had arranged a deal! He would trade it, as was, to Henry B. Davis, the last inhabitant of No Mans Land, in exchange for a share in the harbor which Davis was going to build at Southeast Bend.<sup>10</sup>

No Mans Land, 1 mile long and 1½ wide, lies off the southwest corner of Martha's Vineyard, an island outpost of an island. Davis was looking for a packet to run between No Mans and New Bedford, and thought the improvised boat, which once had come all the way from



Brazil, might do. Slocum was looking for a trade, of course, but probably also for a homeport for the sloop, and a port in a storm for himself. But the deal fell through. The harbor Davis planned was never dredged; the *Liberdade*, never delivered. And No Mans, no longer inhabited, today is a practice target for Navy bombers.

One of Slocum's friends at Menemsha was a man named Ernest J. Dean. Dean was a young trap fisherman, and having a boat with power, he also boated fish to New Bedford. He said that Slocum depended on him to tow the *Spray* in and out of Menemsha Creek, a worse tide hole then than now. He said that he and the aging captain, whom he greatly admired, spent hours together on the *Spray*, or on Dean's boat, or in Dean's boat-house.

The merchant captain who had sailed all seas discussed with his insular friend the forthcoming voyage. "It was most interesting and educational," Dean wrote, "to lay out the proposed courses with him, and also amusing to see him run his index finger (I think every finger and thumb on both hands was knuckle busted, set back or crooked—they looked worse than the fingers of an old time ball player) over miles and miles of ocean chart, and listen to his running chatter of his experiences in different parts shown on the chart . . ."<sup>11</sup>

Some time in November 1905, Slocum sailed from Menemsha, bound for the West Indies, alone in the *Spray*. Dean said the captain started in a hard norther so as to get out into the Atlantic trade winds as soon as possible. Slocum sailed south by easy stages, and called at Cuban and Jamaican ports. In Kingston, he was entertained by the colonel of the Royal Artillery in the style he was ac-

customed to when going around the world. From there, he sailed to Cayman Brac, then to Grand Cayman. At Grand Cayman, he lived two months on the sloop. He called the country "delightful," and winter there, "very pleasant."<sup>12</sup>

The sloop lay behind the reefs where Slocum spent his time in fishing up conch shells. The natives dived for them in two fathoms of water, bringing up one at a time. But the Yankee skipper showed them a thing or two. He remembered the Vineyard quahog rake, and with some stiff wire which he had on board, he made himself something like it. With that device he was able to scoop up a dozen at once.

By the time he was ready to return to Massachusetts, the captain had shipped about a thousand shells, together with such curiosities as specimens of the lace tree. Then just before he sailed, in early spring, several local admirers of Theodore Roosevelt asked him to deliver a half dozen rare orchid plants to the president. Slocum agreed to do so.<sup>13</sup>

*I was destined to sail once more into the depths of solitude, but these experiences had no bad effect upon me; on the contrary, a spirit of charity and even benevolence grew stronger in my nature through the meditations of these supreme hours on the sea.*

SOLITUDE HAS its charms. But God did not think it good that man should be alone. Indeed, the lives of lonely men are beset with peculiar perils.

According to what was reported in New Bedford, Slocum left Grand Cayman about 1 April, stopped at Key West, and Beaufort, North Carolina, and reached New York near the end of July.<sup>1</sup> That account, however, given out by Slocum himself, was too highly compressed—even when allowance is made for the patches of frustration and boredom and hardship which inevitably accompany a voyager.

The captain was being reticent again. Following the habit of many years, he suppressed all references to difficulties,\*interior as well as outward, and to the extent that he did so, he held back reality as well.

Among his Vineyard acquaintances was Leslie W.

Miller, who, with his family, wintered in Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup> Slocum may have had in mind a call on the Millers, when, homeward bound, he detoured up the Delaware River and tied up at the Riverton, New Jersey, Yacht Club, where he had been invited to lecture. At that point the river is imposingly broad, and in those days some fine dwellings stood there. It is not far above Camden, and opposite northeast Philadelphia.

Percy Chase Miller, the son, as well as his father, regarded Slocum as an upstanding, rather strong character wearing what seemed, even then, old-fashioned chin whiskers. "Anyone brought into contact with the old man would have been interested in his general nautical appearance and atmosphere. There was no mistaking he was an old sea dog," Percy Miller said.

"I also saw him near Camden sometime in 1906. After he got into trouble there, I felt he was a little dippy. He was put in jail and my father went to try and help him.

"About the same time, he spent a night with us. He arrived respectably, and even nattily, arrayed. I remember him saying he'd like me to play the piano for him, and I did—for an hour or more. He seemed to enjoy it; said the sounds were not unpleasing.

"Slocum was lean and hungry looking and gaunt. But he looked as though he could take care of himself. I never was disappointed in his appearance or behaviour though I am quite sure he was a little cracked."

The trouble Miller referred to was published in a number of papers including the *Boston Herald*, but not, apparently, in the *Vineyard Gazette*.<sup>4</sup> The captain was charged with attempting to violate a twelve-year-old girl

on board the sloop. His Boston relations, and his wife's, read of the allegations and, in a cousin's words, "the matter was so awful and our family so shocked, that they soft-pedaled whenever we younger ones were around . . . We who knew the captain had found him affectionate to a degree with young things . . ."

At the scene, the local paper, a weekly, reported, "Held on Serious Charge."<sup>4</sup> Naming the daughter of residents of the town, it said she "had suffered indignities at the hands of Capt. Slocum aboard his yacht *Spray*" on the previous Friday. "From the story of the child and an investigation by Dr. Mills, it became evident that the worst fears of the parents were not realized, the child not being injured, though she suffered considerably from nervousness." The incident is said to have occurred about three in the afternoon, while at five, the paper reported, Slocum went off to Philadelphia. Was it then that he saw the Millers? If so, while the piano was being played, a warrant was being issued. "The Captain returned about nine o'clock in the evening and was arrested by Marshal Quigley. He was given a hearing before Recorder Coddington Saturday morning and committed to the county jail without bail. At the hearing Capt. Slocum said he had no recollection of the misdemeanor with which he is charged, and if it occurred it must have been during one of the mental lapses to which he was subject.

"The sloop *Spray* was placed in charge of Michael Faunce pending other arrangements . . .

"Yesterday Judge Gaskill set Capt. Slocum's bail at \$1,000." That is, bail was set six days after the captain's arrest.

The paper also published a letter written by the father of the girl wherein he said that an article going the rounds and entitled "An assault on a little girl in Riverton, N. J." appeared to misstate the facts, and that he and his wife "are greatly relieved to learn by questioning the child, also by Dr. C. S. Mills' examination, that there was no attempt at rape for the child is not physically injured although greatly agitated by the indecent action and exposure of the person on the part of this creature now posing in the limelight of cheap notoriety.

"We regret exceedingly the necessity of publicity for the child's sake but feel assured that the exposure of such a fiend will be regarded as a service rendered the public.

"We respectfully request you to publish this in a prominent place in your paper, for the interest of my child and family demand it."

Going by the paper, and there seems to be nothing else to go by, it is interesting to note that Slocum did not deny the charge, described as a misdemeanor, and which, apparently, was indecent exposure. On the contrary, he is quoted as saying something quite different: that he did not recall such an incident, and that if it occurred, it must have been during one of his "mental lapses." This is the first hint from Slocum himself of trouble with his head. It is possible for such a blow as he received from a heaving line thrown at Newcastle, New South Wales, in 1896, to produce characteristic lapse of memory.

The letter of the girl's father did not save the captain from being committed to jail at Mt. Holly, the county seat—not charged with a misdemeanor, but charged with a crime: rape.<sup>5</sup> As for bail, it is obvious that Slocum did

not have a thousand dollars, nor any way to raise it. A search of the County Clerk's Office of Burlington County disclosed neither receipt for bail nor record of indictment. Indeed, being all alone, the aging traveler would seem to have been at a disadvantage in obtaining the maximum consideration of the law.

True to his penchant for evoking the unusual, Slocum now found himself caged in a quite remarkable jail. The gray stone structure was almost one hundred years old. It had been built in 1808 from plans drawn by Robert Mills, the famous early American architect and leader in the Greek Revival.<sup>6</sup>

Day after day Slocum stayed in Mills' ancient building of grim and handsome colonial design, waiting for a grand jury action which finally did not come; which explains how it happened that he was never indicted. Instead, through signing a waiver, his case was heard by a judge without jury. But that did not come about right away. Today, in New Jersey, psychiatric examination is mandatory in cases of alleged sex offenders, but in 1906 it is not unlikely that the authorities were embarrassed to know what to do with their distinguished, but somewhat unraveled caller.

Slocum was penned up forty-two days.\* It was not a longer time than he had spent on several occasions within the confines of the *Spray*. It had been forty-three days continuous sailing from Juan Fernandez to the Marquesas; forty-two from Samoa to Australia. But the view from the

\* Probably not his first experience. See *Voyage of the Liberdade*, Chapter VI, for his uncandid account of his trial in Brazil twenty years earlier.

jail was different. The jail cell did not rock. And the sound of the lapping of water was not heard. Yet none of the basic conditions—low company, coarse fare, tight quarters, discomfort, and obloquy, were new to the merchant captain. It is not likely that at age sixty-two, chance and circumstance still had the power to hurt him. If he was in any way displeased with himself, he was not the man to show it. He had his Spartan code to sustain him. He knew that the *Spray*, down in the river, as usual offered escape. As for patience, which he called the greatest of virtues, he had learned it from sailing.

The end of the unscheduled stopover in Slocum's long voyage home, came, the Mt. Holly paper reported, on Friday afternoon, 6 July, when Judge Joseph H. Gaskill held another session of court. The charge had by now been changed to committing an indecent assault. The captain's counsel entered a plea of *non vult contendere* for his client, and said there was no intention to do the child bodily harm.

*Non vult contendere* (literally, he will not contest it), in New Jersey, is legally equivalent to a plea of guilty. It is often used, and this would seem to have been the case here, to effect a face-saving settlement. When accepted by the court, it becomes an implied confession of guilt, but only for the purposes of the particular case. It is an implied confession only, and cannot be used against the defendant in any subsequent suit.

By this method, Judge Gaskill quietly put the case to rest. In winding up, he was reported as saying: "I am very sorry to be obliged to administer reproof to a man of your experience and years, and I am glad, and no doubt



you are, too, that in this case there was no attempt made to injure the person of the girl. Upon request of the family I can deal leniently with you. You must never return to Riverton either by rail or water. By payment of all costs you are discharged."<sup>7</sup> The judge did not pronounce Slocum guilty though that judgment followed by legal inference from the captain's implied confession of guilt.

Slocum was the victim of the hazards of sailing alone, and of the still unsatisfied demands of his temperament. The longing for warmth, and the need to be noticed, seemed to be as urgent as ever. Meanwhile, he was becoming an old man, becoming forgetful about his dress, and possibly, his actions. The old defenses of repression were crumbling, and he was losing control.

Quitting the judge and jail in Mt. Holly, Slocum next day picked up the voyage exactly where he had left off.<sup>8</sup> Once more he was on his way to deliver the orchids to the president. More delicate than the captain, or the captain's reputation, only one flower had survived the interlude. This he proposed to deliver.

It was early August when the *Spray* sailed into Oyster Bay. One of the president's sons, Archibald, came alongside almost at once.

"I was sailing around with a sailor from the president's yacht, the *Sylph*, who was named Obie," Archibald Roosevelt recalled, "when we saw a decrepit looking old sloop, with the name *Spray* painted on it. On boarding her, Captain Slocum greeted us. He was a slim, medium-sized man, dressed\* in black trousers and a white shirt, and he took us around the boat, and told us yarns about his trip.

"When I went home that evening, I told my father

of my visit, and he, since he had heard of the voyage, was very much interested, and asked me to go out the next day and extend an invitation to the captain to visit Sagamore Hill. This I did, and in due course the captain arrived, where he proceeded to make friends of all of us, particularly my brother Kermit, and me. He was fond of Kermit because he and Kermit were great admirers of the poems of Rudyard Kipling. The captain could repeat much of Kipling. I remember that he liked 'The Rhyme of the Three Sealers,' 'The Bell Buoy,' 'The Long Trail,' and 'The Virginity.'"<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in a matter of days, the captain navigated from a Jersey jail to a place by the side of the president. And after that, Archie and Obie sailed to Newport on the *Spray* while Roosevelt wrote a friend, 6 August, ". . . Archie is off for a week's cruise with Captain Joshua Slocum—that man who takes his little boat, without any crew but himself, all around the world."<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the cruise, Archibald Roosevelt said: "The boat was the most incredibly dirty craft I have ever seen. You can imagine how it offended Obie, who had been trained in the U. S. Navy. When we stopped at New Haven, Obie went ashore, and returned with a kerosene stove, which he bought with his own money, and jettisoned the filthy old relic that had served the captain, I don't know how many years.

"In mild warm weather, the captain often cooked on deck, and he had a most ingenious contrivance. He had an old-fashioned laundry tub, in the bottom of which he coiled a piece of heavy anchor chain. On top of the chain he built a fire of drift-wood.

"As a diet, he was fond of salt fish and every so often he would make us enormous pancakes, 'as thick as your foot,' he would tell us.

"The sleeping quarters were in the after cabin, and Obie and I slept on the top of a wooden chest, and the captain had his bunk.

"In the hold, there was a quantity of miscellaneous equipment, and an enormous number of conch shells. Some of these had not been too carefully cleaned, and there was a fine ripe odor permeating the center part of the ship.

"While we were sailing, we would busy ourselves filing the points off the shells, and thereby making fog horns out of them. These, the captain would sell to visitors who came aboard when he was anchored in a port. He also sold his book, and charged, I believe, ten cents to every visitor. We learned, under his tutelage, to be pretty good salesmen of the shells and the book.

"Of course we saw the famous alarm clock, which had to be boiled before it would run. Beyond my comprehension were his sheets of calculations for the lunar observation he had made single-handedly—a feat, I believe, which is supposed to require three people to work out.

"It is quite common for sail boats to sail on the wind with little or no attention paid to the helm, but the old *Spray* was, so far as my experience goes, unique in the fact that it would sail off the wind as well as on, without it being necessary to mind the helm after the course was set."

The meeting with the Roosevelt family, the first of

several, ended in a most cheerful fashion. The captain received a complimentary letter:

*My dear Captain Slocum:*

I thank you for your interesting volume, which you know I prize.

By the way, I entirely sympathize with your feeling of delight in the sheer loneliness and vastness of the ocean. It was just my feeling in the wilderness of the west.\*

Sincerely yours,  
Theodore Roosevelt<sup>11</sup>

After seeing Archie and Obie home, Slocum went home himself—for the first time in nine months or so. But after less than a month on the farm, he was on his way again, still planning, still searching. The new dream was

\* An opinion of the Roosevelt-Slocum encounter, based on conviction rather than knowledge, was published in *The Roosevelt Family of Sagamore Hill* by Hermann Hagedorn, New York, 1954, p. 245. Lumping Slocum with Robert E. Peary, and reckoning without the orchids, Hagedorn wrote: "There were people who were not beckoned to come to Sagamore but found a compelling excuse . . . Two such were sea-faring men . . . the one a pursuer of aimless adventure, the other, incarnate purpose to the point of fanaticism. Daring was the quality they had in common . . . The intrepid water-tramp, Captain Joshua Slocum, had all his adult life sailed the seven seas in his forty-foot sloop . . ."

If Peary sought out Roosevelt, it seems clear that Slocum, in his oblique way, walked in as one of the invited. The "intrepid water-tramp" had not, of course, spent all his adult life in sailing the sloop. To write of Slocum without reference to his twenty years' career as a merchantman, to his unique and lasting achievement—above all, to the fact that he wrote an immortal book—is like describing John Chapman as a backwoods orchardist while neglecting to mention his accomplishments as Johnny Appleseed.

to be the first man to go through the Panama Canal. After that, he wanted to push on to China and Japan, "to demonstrate," as he said, "that it is an easy trip."<sup>12</sup> But there is no record of the captain's having seen the canal, on which preliminary work had begun in 1904. In fact, the canal was not opened until 1915, by which time Slocum, if he had lived, would have been seventy-one.

Before embarking on any grandiose scheme, there was still that piece of unfinished business: what to do about the *Liberdade*. The Slocum-Smithsonian correspondence had now been dragging along for six years, and the boat was still in Washington, still in the way. Finally, another letter went off, this time from Providence, R. I., 13 October 1906.

*My dear Professor Mason:*

If it is not asking too much I would like very much to have *Liberdade* hauled away to ~~some~~ lot or down to the Potomac if any of your people know a place for here there or most any where. I would chance her, turned bottom up, under a tree, or alongside of a stone wall or fence . . .

I have written Archie Roosevelt about *Liberdade*. If Archie cares for her please deliver to him. Otherwise she might be hauled inland to some farm yard. I headed for Washington last spring but was blown off shore and couldn't fetch the capes of the Chesapeake. I am now on the eve, almost, of another trip to West Indies—It is glorious there in winter—and I will fetch ~~the~~ Potomac, in the Spring . . .

Now the old craft at a farm house, if Archie dont want her, would be all right

I feel guilty for not having carted this boat away and after you have been so kind I have no right to ask it but if your people can lodge her somewhere for me till next Spring! Anyhow she must go from the present place.

Very Sincerely  
Joshua Slocum<sup>18</sup>

Later in the year, Slocum made arrangements to have the *Liberdade* delivered to a boat-yard on the Washington waterfront.<sup>14</sup> But just where, or when, or what became of her, no one knows to this day.

*You must then know the sea, and  
know that you know it, and not  
forget that it was made to  
be sailed over.*

As SLOCUM approached the end of his life, he became more disassociated, more irascible, less communicative. The fixed points become fewer. It is as though actuality were slipping from his grasp.

As writer, too, he had passed the peak, and was sliding down the farther side. After the successful serialization of *Sailing Alone*, he naturally tried to sell to the *Century* again. Even before the appearance of his book, he was corresponding with Buel about a piece on the South Sea pirate, Bully Hayes. "Of all the bucaneeers and pirates of my acquaintance, Captain, pirate Hayes had the most winning ways—he was very taking," Slocum wrote.<sup>1</sup> He promised to send an outline, but if he did, Buel did not buy it.

In book form, *Sailing Alone* did well, and as early as 1902, was in its third printing. Sales were approaching the 10,000 mark. In April of that year, Slocum and Buel discussed the idea of a new edition of *Voyage of the Liberdade*. However, Buel had several complaints about it. Slocum replied: "I will strengthen human sympathy in

it as I go along on the next trip through the MS—with a pilot onboard.”<sup>2</sup> But the Century Company did not re-issue the story, nor has any American publisher done so.

In the wake of the success of *Sailing Alone*, the captain sold his earlier writing. As already noted, *Voyage of the Destroyer* was bought by McClure’s magazine and appeared in March 1900. After the Century rejected *Voyage of the Liberdade*, Slocum sold it to *Outing* magazine. It was published November 1902-April 1903 as *Voyage of the Aquidneck*.

Now he disposed of the last of his literary wares, the notes on Bully Hayes. In March 1906, *Outing* magazine published *Bully Hayes, the Last Buccaneer*. The by-line: “Written from Data Supplied by Captain Joshua Slocum.”

In this ghost-written piece there is scarcely a phrase with the true Slocum flavor. It was strictly a commercial transaction. *Outing* bought, and published, discrepancies and all. Slocum never could write the piece because he had no important connection with the subject. His one contribution to Hayes was not in the “data,” but in a letter to Buel: “I have seen no one resemble him, in portrait, more than John Ruskin.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as the captain admired professors like Langley and Mason, so he admired freebooters like Morgan and Hayes. He himself shared the conquistador qualities of mind required for outstanding performance in either profession. With a little difference in luck, he might have been one or the other.

The success of his book had not been able to wrench him from the old way of life. By autumn of 1906, he was wandering again. The family genealogist wanted to find



him and get him to fill out a questionnaire. From Block Island, R. I., 15 November, Slocum wrote briefly:

My mails have not reached me on time of late . . .

I regret that I have not been able to be, myself, a better subject among my kin—to have added an interesting line . . .<sup>4</sup>

The captain sailed south again, alone again, and spent a second winter in the Cayman Islands. When spring returned, he set his white wings for the north. From the banks of the Potomac, foot of Seventh Street, 26 May 1907, he wrote B. Aymar:

I was glad to get your letter . . .

I am going ahead some again, with a vessel full of stuff worth something . . .

The president sent down for me yesterday to meet him in the Red Room, White House. Archie came and brought me in their market wagon . . .

Archie will join me again at Oyster Bay . . . You must find time to meet us . . .

Your father  
Joshua Slocum<sup>5</sup>

The story is told that when the captain shook hands with the president in the White House, Mr. Roosevelt said: "Captain, our adventures have been a little different."

And the captain said: "That is true, Mr. President, but I see you got here first."<sup>6</sup>

Archibald Roosevelt reported that his father took a great interest in Slocum, as he did in all adventurous men,

and entertained him at home rather than at the office. "I remember that my father rang for the butler, a wonderful old colored man named Duncan, and ordered a rum drink for the captain. When the captain protested, my father explained that as he was only a president, while the captain was a real captain, he (the captain) would have to drink for both of them. After the visit, I rode back to the Navy Yard with Slocum, and he said to me: 'My head is just humming from that drink!' It was only years later that I found that he was practically a teetotaler."

From Washington, Slocum sailed to Oyster Bay with his cargo of forest orchids, coral, curiosities, souvenirs, and books. When he arrived, in June, it was a busy and popular place. The presidential yacht was moored at the harbor entrance. Overlooking the harbor was Sagamore Hill, the summer White House. He anchored alongside a Sandy Hook pilot boat, owned by a young man, Stanley Putney Morris. Morris recalled that he helped tow the *Spray* into nearby harbors "where the captain gave talks to various groups and sold and autographed a lot of books . . . He had a very nice Columbia phonograph . . . would play records and spin yarns."

Slocum waited around Oyster Bay for young Archibald. They were planning a second trip together. "Once a year sea-battered, kindly old Capt. Joshua Slocum puts in the harbor here with his weatherbeaten snub-nosed, tight little yawl, the *Spray* . . . to see his chum, Archie Roosevelt. The two are fast friends and they are preparing to start Monday for a cruise along the New England coast . . ." reported the *New York World*, 13 July. But somehow they did not get started.

So the captain sailed alone for Martha's Vineyard, and reached Cottage City (Oak Bluffs) at the height of the tourist season. He soon got together a little crew to help him unload. One of his former hands said that she was a girl of twelve when she met the captain in the summer of 1907.

"His boat was tied up at the wharf," she wrote, "and my girl chum and I were fascinated with the sponges, shells, and odd things he had for sale. He was friendly and told us all about them . . . When he found that we were at the Frasier House, just over the rise, he asked us if we would like to sell his little souvenir books, shells, etc. . . . We were delighted . . . We learned the stories and where the articles came from, and how to blow the shells for customers as the captain did when he needed a fog horn. He was much pleased with our work, and paid us well . . . and was kind to us always."<sup>8</sup>

Before he sailed south a third time, alone, the captain boarded a train and went from Boston to Groton. "He turned up on a Sunday to call on my brother, Kermit and me," Archibald Roosevelt wrote. Groton was a strict Episcopalian school, and the captain, like the other guests, was expected to attend chapel, and afterwards to shake hands with the rector—which he did. The Roosevelt boy stood by his friend while the rector politely asked how the visitor enjoyed the service. "Well," replied the captain who had very personal ideas on communion with his Maker, "there was too much popping up and setting down, and too much sassing back!"<sup>9</sup>

When Slocum set sail in the autumn of 1907, his intention was to go to South America. However, he knew

that his Menemsha friend, Ernest Dean, was in the Bahamas, working as captain of a yacht. Slocum decided to surprise him. One day, he simply turned up in Nassau harbor. "As soon as the port doctor left," Dean wrote, "I had one of my sailors row me alongside, and when Slocum recognized me, he let out a loud, 'Come aboard!' grabbed me by the arms and fairly swung me on deck. I was amazed (and still am) at his strength . . ." <sup>10</sup>

In Nassau, the old sailor-showman made one of his last appearances on the platform. Dean recalled it as "a soup and fish" affair at the Colonial Hotel. The governor and his staff attended. After the talk, the captain was kept busy telling more yarns in the grille, where the men, according to Dean, became hilarious and liberal. The captain went away \$460 to the good. A few nights later he gave his talk in a church for an admission fee and took in \$42.

Dean recalled a further incident of the captain's visit. It showed how thin-skinned Slocum had become. Dean said he was walking on Bay Street when he saw the sloop lying alongside a sponge wharf, and four or five natives standing in a group, and Slocum standing between them and the edge of the wharf. One native was holding a cloth over his mouth which was bleeding. "Slocum," Dean wrote, "seemed all nerved up. I asked him what had happened, and here is his reply:

"I was splicing some rigging on deck when they came along—ginned up some—and started talking about the *Spray* and its size and running it down in general. One of them said loud enough for anyone to hear, "Any mon that says he sailed around the world in that thing is a goddom

liar." I looked up in time to see which one said it, made a pier head leap, and with a couple of side-winders, unshipped his jaw.'"<sup>11</sup>

Late in the following spring, on 11 May 1908, Hettie wrote her husband's friend, Buel. She said she had read that the *Spray* had been lost. "Personally have not heard from Captain Slocum since Nov. 1st 1907 . . . Will you kindly let me know if you have heard from him or of him of late . . ."<sup>12</sup> But Buel had had no word either.

On 2 June, the seemingly unsinkable captain sailed into New York harbor with a two-ton chunk of coral on board for the American Museum of Natural History. It had been found by scientists off Andros Island in the Bahamas, and they had engaged the ex-merchantman to transport it to the United States. It was the tenth anniversary of the return of the *Spray*.

Though Slocum was undoubtedly pleased to have shipped a cargo once again, he had left the West Indies in a huff. He had heard remarks among the governor's staff which were, or which he thought were, uncomplimentary to the *Spray* and himself. So when the governor asked to see the coral he was taking out of the country, so to speak, Slocum did not comply. Instead, when ready to leave, he beat the *Spray* up to the channel entrance buoy directly below the hill on which the governor's residence stood. Then swinging the *Spray* off before the wind, he presented the governor with a fine view of her broad stern. In his heightened state of exasperation, he was making the nautical equivalent of a vulgar gesture. Holding his course, Slocum ran Nassau out of sight.

At the time of delivering the coral, Captain Slocum

presented the Museum with a gift from himself: a wooden shield from North Queensland, Australia.<sup>13</sup> Had he picked it up on the voyage around, or had it belonged to Virginia? It is still in the Museum's collection, but the two-ton coral, like the *Liberdade*, has mysteriously dropped out of sight.

From New York, the captain went back to Martha's Vineyard, but not to live in West Tisbury. From the *Spray*, tied up at Vineyard Haven, 23 July, charmed and charming as always when dealing with the learned, he wrote the director of the Museum a gracious letter:

. . . I am more than pleased with the thought of having the picture in the Spray library, and it shall together with your letter, find a prominent place in this part of the Old sloop where treasures are to be found . . .<sup>14</sup>

By now, the captain, in his adopted town, was recognized as the transient he was. On 30 July, the *Vineyard Gazette* reported: "Captain Joshua Slocum of the sloop Spray is on the Island and has been a recent guest of Mrs. Slocum at West Tisbury." Slocum is mentioned only twice again in the *Vineyard Gazette* in his lifetime. On both occasions he was reported on the move.<sup>15</sup>

The last time Archibald Roosevelt saw Slocum was in Oyster Bay again, in cooler weather, probably late in 1908. "The *Sylph* was taking my father and the family to some function or other," he wrote, "and had just weighed anchor and was rounding the Light House, when we saw the *Spray* beating into the harbor. Of course the

men were all busy and failed for several minutes to see that the *Spray* had dipped her flag in salute to the president. When we returned, and called on the *Spray*, the captain of the *Sylph* apologized and gave as an excuse the explanation that they were so busy. Captain Slocum laughed: 'I held those halliards till I thought my hands would freeze. There were fifty men on the *Sylph* and one on the *Spray*, but evidently that one can get things done on time.'

Around 1908, H. S. Smith, a youthful yachtsman, paid the usual admission fee and went aboard the *Spray* in New Bedford. He explored her thoroughly. On going below, he found "many evidences of serious deterioration," he wrote.<sup>16</sup>

Smith and his companions went for a sail with the captain. "We were all allowed a trick at the wheel," Smith said, "and I was amazed at the old tub's easy steering and her dryness. There was a strong southwesterly blowing which raised the usual Buzzards Bay chop, but not a drop of water came aboard and she sailed at a remarkably small angle of heel. Also, once sheets had been properly trimmed, she would steer herself for an indefinite time, to such an extent that a trick at the wheel was rather monotonous and somewhat unnecessary."

Smith described Slocum as wearing a battered felt hat, "originally black but bleached out irregularly," a collarless shirt, a vest, unbuttoned trousers, and high lace-up shoes "badly in need of polish." The captain volunteered little information but readily answered questions. "His language was that of a cultured gentleman," Smith

said; and he spoke rather vaguely of a possible voyage down the east coast of South America.

But, Smith added, the *Spray* was dirty. "Not just a little dirty but very, very dirty." He said that the captain was much run down physically, "and perhaps mentally," and that he was exceedingly indifferent to his surroundings. He was like some condemned old craft.

Joseph Conrad's one-time chief mate, Mr. B—, said in Sydney: "Ports are no good—ships rot, men go to the devil!"<sup>17</sup> But this was only part of the trouble with Slocum. He was clearly in a state of general fatigue. His energies, too generously used, had by now been exhausted, or at least, overstrained.



*I was born in the breezes, and I had  
studied the sea as perhaps few men  
have studied it, neglecting  
all else.*

WEST TISBURY now lost all its charms. From Quincy, Massachusetts, 4 September 1909, Slocum wrote Victor:

Your letter . . . was received just as I was leaving  
W Tisbury

. . . We are pulling out of it for the winter at least  
and would sell if a purchaser should turn up

The little place you speak of is unoccupied . . . I  
think no one will live on the road this winter except  
Sam West whom you know—It would be all very nice  
in summer

I am on the Spray hustling for a dollar

Just where I will be next I don't know . . .<sup>1</sup>

The captain, sixty-five years old, was getting ready to embark on a wildly sensational scheme of exploration. His idea was to sail to South America, and enter the Orinoco River. Sailing up the Orinoco, he would try to proceed into the Rio Negro, thence to the headwaters of the Amazon; then down that long unknown course to the western ocean, and that way home. He was planning to go alone, as usual, but taking his phonograph so that, should some Indians take him for a god, he would be able

to set up in business. It will be recalled that he owned a copy of Henry Walter Bates's *The Naturalist on the Amazons*.

To get ready, he took the *Spray* to Bristol, Rhode Island, to the famed Herreshoff Works. Victor wrote that the *Spray* was overhauled there, and that when she left, "she was well fitted and provided for." The captain, he wrote, "was in the best of physical health."<sup>2</sup>

Victor, however, was not on the scene. Mr. L. Francis Herreshoff was, and he wrote: "The *Spray* did not have any work done on her at the Herreshoff Company but simply lay at one of their wharves in what is called Walker's Cove. She may have been given some old ropes, but the captain did everything himself in the refit. In my opinion the *Spray* was a poor boat for single-handed cruising . . . some of her gear was very light and weak . . . I shouldn't be surprised if I were the last one to speak to the captain for I saw him off on the morning that he departed."<sup>3</sup>

But he was not the last because Bristol was not the captain's last landfall. There are several other candidates for the honor.

Captain Ernest Mayhew, of Menemsha, said he was the last man but one to see Slocum because he had followed him out of Menemsha Basin when Slocum started on his last voyage, and that he had seen him head SSE. Captain Mayhew added that he thought Slocum had been getting slack; that just before he sailed, the *Spray* had been moored by two stakes; that high tide had lifted her bowsprit onto one of the stakes, and that when the tide fell, the bowsprit was hung up on the stake and lifted several inches. Captain Mayhew said he saw Slocum take

an axe and drive the bowsprit back into place, and that he (Mayhew) had not thought much of that.

Others noted with concern the *Spray's* condition. Slocum's friend, Dean, wrote: "The captain grew slack in keeping her up. When I first met him and the *Spray*, they both were neat, trim and seaworthy, but as the years rolled along, I noticed signs of wear and exposure." Captain Donald L. Poole, of Chilmark, said of the *Spray* that "her rigging was slack and in need of tarring, and Irish pennants were much in evidence." Irish pennants are loose ends hanging about the sails or rigging.

From Menemsha, Slocum sailed to Vineyard Haven. On 14 November 1909, he set sail again, outward bound, and alone, but he does not seem to have made his port of call. The old sailor and his boat, lover and beloved, left the visible world together, and no trace of either ever has been found.\*

Captain Levi Jackson, of Edgartown, said he was coming in from codfishing off the Muskeget Channel shoals (between Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket) in his boat, the *Priscilla*, when he saw the *Spray*, bound out. He said that at the time he remarked it looked bad for a boat without power to be heading southeast. The wind was coming from that direction and by evening it was blowing a gale. Captain Jackson said he was glad to get home that night because during the night the gale hauled northwest

\* The wheel of the *Spray*, which hangs in the Boston Yacht Club, was not the one in use on the sloop's last voyage. It had been given by the captain to Ernest Dean and John Hammett who, in turn, presented it to the club. In June 1912, in *Harper's Magazine*, Arnold Bennett wrote, "... I saw there the very wheel of the *Spray*; the cockboat in which the regretted Slocum wafted himself around the world." At the time of her disappearance, the *Spray* was a floating museum.

making a heavy cross sea. He said he believed it was the same wind coming back, that such storms are not uncommon, and that they whip up great combers over the shoals.

Francis V. Mead, of Boston, wrote that he believed that he and Captain John Randolfe, of Cottage City, fishing in Muskeget Channel, were the last to see Slocum.<sup>4</sup> B. H. Kidder, of Oak Bluffs, claimed that he saw Slocum still later, at Bridgeport, Connecticut; that he asked him where he was headed for; and that Slocum replied, "Some far away places."<sup>5</sup>

There were, and are, of course, all sorts of theories as to what might have happened. Victor, in his book, favored the idea that with her dim oil-burning running side-lights, the *Spray* was cut down in the shipping lanes she would have to cross, heading south. T. F. Day, editor of *The Rudder* magazine, guessed that the sloop spewed a plank. He described her as "considerably dozy" the last time he saw her. Then, there is always the possibility of collision, or fire at sea; or of a sailor falling, or being washed over the side. Some have said that Slocum simply played out; others, that he perished of fever far up the Amazon. There were rumors of his having been seen and reported by steamships. No one, apparently, has suggested—perhaps because no one has known heretofore of the captain's occasional lapses of memory—that he might have suffered another spell; might have blacked out, and thus been unable to guide the *Spray* through the night.

There is no need to choose or accept any one of these theories. A combination of causes may have led to the ultimate effect. Hettie's petition to the court several years later said: "... that Joshua Slocum . . . *disappeared, absconded* and absented himself on the 14th day of

November A. D. 1909; . . . that said absentee . . . a Master Mariner by occupation . . . disappeared on the date above-named under the following circumstances, to wit: He sailed from Tisbury\* Massachusetts in the Sloop 'Spray' of about nine tons burden only . . . encountered a very severe gale shortly afterwards and has never been heard from since<sup>76</sup>

It is by no means unthinkable, or even ironical, that Slocum, after going all the way by water, was very likely lost close to land. In spite of all hazards, it is better for the sailor to be on the open sea than skirting the treacherous shore. Slocum himself, in *Sailing Alone*, described how the closest call in all his vast voyage came on a trip across a lagoon in a squall. Whatever the conclusion is to be, the gale as Captain Jackson described it must be considered; and the shoals on which the sloop could have tripped and foundered. Also, the condition of the aging *Spray*. "Even in the early days of her rejuvenation," wrote a contemporary, "she was not of the strongest, being built out of whatever came to hand and cost least."<sup>77</sup> Most of all, the condition of the captain must be kept in mind.

A fatalist, as men who have lived long with danger are wont to be, he seems to have sailed in defiance of the southeast gale breeding that day. For men like Slocum, the joy of living was in taking the helm, and in steering in the teeth of the blow. Still, the voyage is not all up to the sailor, but also up to the wind and the currents, and to the wisdom of the impenetrable Being which the sailor knows truly exists because he sees It in the beauty and mystery of the sea.

Every man tends to get more or less what he wants.

\* The old name for Vineyard Haven.

And at that point, what was it Slocum wanted? Space, escape, adventure, danger, self-destruction, God, love—they all seem possible. His decision to sail, when and as he did, could have been his way toward his goal. Garfield said that his father told him that he hoped to be buried at sea. Hope could have turned to longing; longing, unconsciously, to impulse. And Slocum was impulsive. It is not what he felt or thought—we have all had such feelings and thoughts—but his acting it out that makes him different.

The true seafaring man does not fear being lost at sea. For such men the sea will be all-sufficient. Joshua Slocum had entered on it in his youth, had spent the vigor of his manhood battling its winds and waves for a living; and, in fact, all his best thoughts and feelings seem to have been of the ocean. What, then, more natural at the end, than that he should lie till eternity in the element which in his life he had loved and fought and cajoled and outwitted.

Slocum's finish, though dramatic and wonderfully fitting, could, of course, have been merely an accident, long overdue, in which one seeks vainly for meaning. For men like Slocum, the sea is a jealous mistress, and never really to be trusted; but he made his home with her for, in the last analysis, her hold on him was too great to be shaken. He answered the poet's question, "Who hath desired the Sea?"

Quite some time passed before his performance was wholly accepted and made final. On 15 January 1924, the court granted Hettie whatever her husband left behind.<sup>8</sup> Captain Joshua Slocum was declared legally dead as of the date on which he last set sail.

*In such a time as this the old  
fisherman prayed, "Remember,  
Lord, my ship is small and  
thy sea is so wide!"*

INSPIRED BY Slocum, a dozen men and more have sailed around the world since, some single-handed, some in boats smaller than the *Spray*. But none has made the voyage he made, and none has written a book like his. With the passing of time, his achievements will loom still larger.

Everything ultimately contributed to the design: early hardship, the climb to fortune, the plunge to disaster, the long descent to fame. Slocum was better fitted, and worth more, for single-handed sailing, and writing about it afterwards, than for anything else in the world. His genius was to find it out.

The story of Joshua Slocum is a story of faithfulness to calling. The happiness he knew was the happiness of pursuit. In the classical manner of all adventurers, he began life by leaving home. He chose a lonely mode of existence, but the sea filled the hollow left by affection denied. Later, for a few years, he found the perfect companion, but when she died he was left even more alone than before.

The son of a casehardened father, Slocum, in turn,

seems to have been much the same. His parental domestic code, like his sexual one, was harshly puritanical. Like all views of life successfully imposed, his involved sacrifice, not only of himself, but of wife, children, and all that most men hold dear.

In our time it is generally known, as it was not in his, that man is not a wholly rational and consciously motivated being; that though motives may be obscure, a plausible reason for behavior can almost always be found. But reason does not exist outside a context of desire, and, as yet, no limit has been found to man's capacity for self-deception.

Slocum's passions were fierce, but his repressions even fiercer. He was one of that vanishing breed, an honest self-deceiver. His self-deception was massive and creative. He strove for harmony and peace, but found them only in the heart of action. Though often outwardly serene, to the end of his life he was driven by that human discontent and restlessness which underlie all great achievement. A kind of prophet of the value of insecurity, he finally sailed away from a world in which he could find no place.

Men who follow the sea, particularly those who spend days, and months, and years at sea, and without companionship, tend to think things through to a philosophy not easily explained. Such a life suckles a type of man, ingrown, perhaps, but firm in his belief in himself and in God; supremely confident, but truly humble before the Lord on the great waters; purposeful and tenacious when once the course is charted, and above all, determined to go as his own beliefs lead him. In such men, there is affirmation as well as adventure.



Impelled by the Invisible Hand, listening only to the inner voice, Slocum discovered and gained a world with flavor, and meaning, and enjoyment. The story of his life, like the story of his sailing alone, belongs to mankind. May it take its place in the annals of the human race. And so the search is ended.

## ***CHAPTER NOTES AND INDEX***



## CHAPTER 1 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone Around the World*, New York, 1900, p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Slocum, Charles Elihu, *A Short History of the Slocum, Slocumb and Slocumb Families 1637-1908*, Defiance, Ohio, Vol. I, 1882, Vol. II, 1908, I, 542
- <sup>3</sup> Johnson, Clifton, 'Captain Joshua Slocum—The Man Who Sailed Around the World in a Thirty-Seven-Foot Boat,' *Outing* magazine, October 1902.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Letter, Joshua Slocum to Joel B. Slocum, his first cousin, 4 May 1899. Copy given by Joel's son, Lorimer B. Slocum of Stamford, Connecticut.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter from Mrs. Grace Murray Brown, Melrose Highlands, Mass., granddaughter of Naomi Slocombe Gates, sister to John Slocombe.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Slocum, Charles Elihu, *op. cit.*
- <sup>9</sup> Copied and sent by Rev. G. E. Sharpe of Westport, Nova Scotia.
- <sup>10</sup> Slocum, Victor, *Capt. Joshua Slocum*, New York, 1950, pp. 26-27. Although undocumented, Victor's book, like the reminiscences of his brothers, and sister, is a leading source of information concerning his father's earliest years.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- <sup>12</sup> Letter to Joel B. Slocum, *op. cit.*
- <sup>13</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter from Mrs. Grace Murray Brown, the captain's cousin.
- <sup>15</sup> Victor Slocum, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- <sup>16</sup> Letter, Joshua Slocum to R. U. Johnson, dated Cottage City 23 July 99. Century Collection, Slocum file, Manuscript Room, New York Public Library.

## CHAPTER 2 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- <sup>2</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895.
- <sup>3</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 47 f.
- <sup>4</sup> Certificate of Marriage loaned by B. Aymar Slocum.

- <sup>5</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum. Letters from B. Aymar Slocum to the present writer, referred to herein, were written between 11 September 1952 and 23 March 1955. <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- <sup>8</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, Edgartown, Mass., 16 December 1949. An obituary. Victor died in New York, age 77.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Leader*, New York, Vol. IX, No. 15.
- <sup>10</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
- <sup>11</sup> *New Bedford Standard*, 3 July 1898.
- <sup>12</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. XVII, p. 217.
- <sup>13</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 92. <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- <sup>15</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum. <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Slocum, Victor, p. 107.
- <sup>18</sup> Matthews, Frederick C., *American Merchant Ships, Series Two*, Salem, Mass., 1931, p. 246.
- <sup>19</sup> Loaned by Catherine Woodruff, niece of Victor Slocum.
- <sup>20</sup> Letter from B. Aymar Slocum.

### CHAPTER 3 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Matthews, Frederick C., *op. cit.*, p. 246.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter from B. Aymar Slocum, Damariscotta, Maine.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter dated 4 May 1899, Slocum to his first cousin, Joel B. Slocum.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> *New York Tribune*, 26 June 1882, p. 8 (back page), col. 1.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter from Mrs. Emma Slocumb Miller, Norwood, Massachusetts.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter, Mrs. Jessie Slocum Joyce, Santa Cruz, California. Letters from Mrs. Joyce to the present writer were written between 1 September 1952 and 21 April 1954.
- <sup>8</sup> Victor Slocum, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
- <sup>9</sup> *Boston Sun*, 3 August 1894.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.
- <sup>11</sup> *Voyage of the Liberdade*, by Captain Joshua Slocum (Press of Robinson & Stephenson, Boston, 1890), p. 10.
- <sup>12</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition.
- <sup>13</sup> Matthews, Frederick C., *op. cit.*, p. 245.
- <sup>14</sup> *Boston Herald-Traveler* Library.
- <sup>15</sup> *New York Tribune*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>16</sup> Matthews, Frederick C., *op. cit.*, p. 246.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter, Mrs. Grace Murray Brown, Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts.
- <sup>18</sup> *Boston Sun*, *op. cit.*

## CHAPTER 4 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Drawings of the *Aquidneck* may be seen in the Marine Museum, Mystic, Conn.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter, Jessie Slocum Joyce.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum. Letters from J. Garfield Slocum to the present writer were written between 1 September 1952 and 21 April 1954.
- <sup>5</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.
- <sup>7</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 180.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Letter, Joshua Slocum to Joel B. Slocum, 4 May 1899.
- <sup>11</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Loaned by Catherine Woodruff.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

## CHAPTER 5 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter, Grace Murray Brown.
- <sup>3</sup> "Analysis of the Handwriting of Joshua Slocum," made for the present writer by Dr. Meta H. Steiner, Elmhurst, New York, psychologist and graphologist.
- <sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, "The Voyage of the Aquidneck and 's Varied Adventures in South American Waters," *Outing* magazine, April 1903.
- <sup>5</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Voyage of the Liberdade*, Boston, 1890, p. 43. In his book about his father, *op. cit.*, p. 187 f., Victor wrote: "To quote from the Aquidneck's log: 'The cargo was at last delivered and no one was made ill over it. A change of rats was also made at Rio. Those we brought gave place to others from the Dom Pedro Docks where we moored. Fleas too skipped about in the hay, as happy as larks and almost as big; and all the other live stock we brought from Rosario—goodness knows of what kith or kin—arrived well and sound from over the water, notwithstanding the fumigations and fuss made at the quarantine.'" But the log was not among Victor's papers shown the present writer, and there is no reason to believe it existed at the time

Victor was writing. On the contrary, it seems clear that what Victor neglected to say was that he was quoting from his father's published account of this particular voyage of the *Aquidneck*, and also, alas, gilding it.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

<sup>9</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Outing* magazine, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Liberdade*, p. 81. <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

<sup>13</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Liberdade*, p. 124.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126. <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> *New York World*, Sunday, 19 May 1899.

<sup>17</sup> Letter, Grace Murray Brown.

## CHAPTER 6 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.

<sup>3</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895.

<sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Voyage of the Liberdade*, Boston, 1890, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> *The Critic's* review contained two errors. First, the author-publisher's address was given as 69 State Street instead of 69 Saratoga—which probably did not affect sales noticeably. Second, the inland voyage was made from New River inlet on the North Carolina, not North California, coast.

<sup>6</sup> Undated and unidentified clipping, library of the *Boston Globe*. It appears to be from a Rhode Island paper (*Providence Journal?*), spring or summer of 1907.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>8</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

<sup>9</sup> Undated clipping, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone Around the World*, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Undated clipping, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.

## CHAPTER 7 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jacques, Lieut. William H., "Ericsson's Destroyer and Submarine Gun," *Questions of the Day* No. XXXI, New York, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Clipping, 26 August 1893, origin unknown, *Boston Herald-Traveler* Library.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>4</sup> Akers, Charles Edmond, *A History of South America*, New York, 1930, p. 302.
- <sup>5</sup> B. Aymer Slocum wrote that his father spoke of a claim against the Dom Pedro government (which preceded Peixoto's) for \$50,000 on account of losses incurred by the *Aquidneck*. If such a claim existed, the overthrow of the Dom Pedro government in 1889 ended it.
- <sup>6</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Voyage of the Destroyer from New York to Brazil*, Boston, 1894, Introduction.
- <sup>7</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*.
- <sup>8</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*
- <sup>9</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
- <sup>10</sup> Clipping, May 1894, origin unknown, *Boston Globe* Library.
- <sup>11</sup> *Boston Sun*, 3 August 1894.
- <sup>12</sup> Clipping, undated, origin unknown, *Boston Globe* Library.
- <sup>13</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 11.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.
- <sup>15</sup> Kilgour, Raymond L., *Messrs. Roberts Brothers*, Ann Arbor, 1952. This interesting study of the publishing house overlooks Slocum's book. However, the little volume, *Voyage of the Liberdade*, is likely to prove to be one of the firm's more durable items.
- <sup>16</sup> The figures are from Roberts Brothers' Cost Book. They were furnished by Henry G. Halladay of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the last survivor of the firm. There are no longer publishers like Roberts Brothers. If they had sold the 1,000 copies of the *Liberdade* at the usual discount, they would have netted about \$300. But four years after publication, they had not yet sold the edition. Some copies were turned over to Little, Brown in 1898. "Little, Brown could not find their office copy," Mr. Halladay wrote. The book is, of course, quite rare.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.
- <sup>18</sup> Slocum's letters to Roberts Brothers, Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass. There are thirteen. They were given to the Museum by B. Aymer Slocum. All letters from Slocum to Roberts Brothers and/or Eugene Hardy, used in the present work, may be seen there.

## CHAPTER 8 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Boston Globe*, 16 April 1895, p. 4.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter, the late Professor J. Duncan Spaeth of Princeton University.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.
- <sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 289.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter, Joshua Slocum to Eugene Hardy, undated.



- <sup>7</sup> Letter, Joshua Slocum to Roberts Brothers.  
<sup>8</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>10</sup> Letter, Alf Ford, Managing Editor, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, to Joshua Slocum, 3 January 1894. The year, as written, is obviously incorrect. It should be 1895.  
<sup>11</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895.  
<sup>12</sup> *Boston Globe*, 16 April 1895. <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>15</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895. <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>17</sup> *Boston Globe*, 16 April 1895. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>20</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 294.  
<sup>21</sup> *Boston Globe*, 16 April 1895.  
<sup>22</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895. <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>24</sup> Letter, Mrs. Grace Murray Brown.  
<sup>25</sup> *Boston Globe*, 16 April 1895.  
<sup>26</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, "The Voyage of the Aquidneck and its Varied Adventures in South American Waters," *Outing* magazine, April 1903. This piece is really *Voyage of the Liberdade*, with a new introductory paragraph, and a few deletions and additions.  
<sup>27</sup> Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1892, 63 pp.  
<sup>28</sup> The copy of *Miserere*, with her card in it, which Mabel gave the captain, is in the library, The Wagnalls Memorial, Lithopolis, Ohio.  
<sup>29</sup> Inscription by Joshua Slocum in copy of *Sailing Alone*: "To Mabel Wagnalls who said 'The Spray will come back . . .'" Library, The Wagnalls Memorial.
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## CHAPTER 9 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1895.  
<sup>2</sup> *Boston Globe*, 16 April 1895, "'Spray, Fairhaven,' is the lettering on her stern . . ."  
<sup>3</sup> 25 April 1895, p. 7. On the same day, the *New York Times*, p. 14, gave briefly the gist of the *Globe's* account. The *Times* did not mention that Slocum was alone. The *New York Herald*, p. 13, in a write-up similar to that of the *Times*, also missed the point that Slocum sailed without crew.  
<sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 12. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.  
<sup>7</sup> Letter, Joshua Slocum to Roberts Brothers, 20 June 1895.  
<sup>8</sup> *Boston Globe*, 30 April 1895, p. 4. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>10</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 26.  
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54. <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.  
<sup>15</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.  
<sup>16</sup> Letter, Ralph Ch. Williams, Colonial Treasurer & Captain of the Port,

Gibraltar, to Mrs. Joshua Slocum, 61 Saratoga Street, East Boston, 30 March 1896, acknowledging receipt of post office money order. Loaned by B. Aymer Slocum.

- <sup>17</sup> 14 October 1895, Monday, p. 6; 21 October, Monday, p. 5; 11 November, Monday, p. 4. Each was signed Joshua Slocum and copyrighted by Roberts Brothers who acted, apparently, as the captain's agent.
- <sup>18</sup> Slocum; Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

## CHAPTER 10 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 67.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100. <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.
- <sup>12</sup> Darwin, Charles, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Everyman's Library ed., pp. 220-231.
- <sup>13</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
- <sup>14</sup> Johnson, Clifton, "The Cook Who Sailed Alone," *Good Housekeeping*, February 1903.
- <sup>15</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-3.
- <sup>16</sup> Barclay, W. S., *The Land of Magellan*, London, Methuen & Co., p. 202.

## CHAPTER 11 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Dana, Richard Henry, *Two Years Before the Mast*, Chapter V.
- <sup>2</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 134.
- <sup>3</sup> Johnson, Clifton, "The Cook Who Sailed Alone," *Good Housekeeping*, February 1903.
- <sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9.
- <sup>5</sup> Johnson, Clifton, *op. cit.*
- <sup>6</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
- <sup>7</sup> *New York Herald*, 12 June 1898, sec. 5, p. 6.
- <sup>8</sup> Johnson, Clifton, *op. cit.* <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155. <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

## CHAPTER 12 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The *Sydney Daily Shipping News*, 30 September 1896. Copied and sent by Mrs. P. R. E. Murnin, of Double Bay, Sydney.

<sup>2</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 1896. Reprinted in *Sloop Spray Souvenir*

<sup>3</sup> The *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 9 October 1896, ff. The *Daily Telegraph* material is from the Joshua Slocum cuttings file, The Mitchell Library, Sydney.

### CHAPTER 13 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, October 1896, Slocum file, The Mitchell Library.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 October 1896.

<sup>5</sup> Holograph letter, gift of Mr. P. R. E. Murnin.

### CHAPTER 14 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Burford Sampson, Pennant Hills, N. S. W.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, Clifton, "Captain Joshua Slocum," *Outing* magazine, October 1902.

<sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 180. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-1.

<sup>6</sup> Holograph letter in the present writer's Slocum collection. Parts of this letter reappeared, reworked, in Chapter XVI of *Sailing Alone*.

<sup>7</sup> Slocum file, Century Collection, Manuscript Room, N. Y. Public Library. If letters were written to, and published by the *World*, they have eluded the present writer.

<sup>8</sup> The present writer was given access to Victor's papers by his niece and executrix, Miss Catherine Woodruff, New York.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, B. Aymar Slocum.

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Jessie Slocum Joyce.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

<sup>12</sup> A sister of Hettie's, Mrs. J. W. Tingley, Brighton, Mass., wrote that Hettie "destroyed many of the Captain's letters, etc., before she left here the last time . . . her mind was failing during the last years." Hettie's life with the captain must have seemed remote indeed. On 10 May 1921, she had married Ulysses Evcret Mayhew, store-keeper and state legislator, of West Tisbury, Mass.

<sup>13</sup> *New Bedford Evening Times*.

<sup>14</sup> *Boston Globe*, 12 January 1898, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Slocum collection, Peabody Museum. Some of the material in this letter went into Chapter XVII of *Sailing Alone*.

## CHAPTER 15 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Boston Globe*, 12 January 1898, p. 4.
- <sup>2</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, pp. 246-7.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264, and also, Eberle, Lieut. Edward W., "The Oregon's Great Voyage," *Century Magazine*, October 1899, pp. 912-24, and also, Cross, R., *The Voyage of the Oregon from San Francisco to Santiago in 1898*, Boston, 1898, pp. 11-15.
- <sup>4</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Sailing Alone*, p. 267.
- <sup>5</sup> *New York Herald*, 12 June 1898, sec. 5, p. 6.
- <sup>6</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 273. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter, Harold S. Smith of Port Washington, N. Y.
- <sup>9</sup> 3 July 1898.
- <sup>10</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

## CHAPTER 16 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> 28 June 1898, p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> *Boston Globe*, 28 June 1898, p. 12.
- <sup>3</sup> Copy of *Miserere*, in The Wagnalls Memorial.
- <sup>4</sup> *Boston Globe*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>5</sup> 28 June 1898, p. 9.
- <sup>6</sup> Newport, 30 June 1898. From the Slocum file, Century Collection, Manuscript Room, New York Public Library. There are more than fifty items in this collection, most of them letters from Slocum to his publishers.
- <sup>7</sup> Newport, 1 July 1898, Century Collection.
- <sup>8</sup> *New Bedford Standard*, 3 July 1898.
- <sup>9</sup> Slocum, Victor, *Capt. Joshua Slocum*, p. 16.
- <sup>10</sup> *New Bedford Mercury*, 4 July 1898.
- <sup>11</sup> Clipping, Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass., Scrapbook 16, p. 194.
- <sup>12</sup> Letter, 30 June 1898, Century Collection.

## CHAPTER 17 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Written from 57 West Eagle Street, the home of Odessa Elliott Century Collection.
- <sup>2</sup> Century Collection, 28 July 1899.

<sup>3</sup> *Sloop Spray Souvenir*, copyright 1901 by Joshua Slocum, privately printed, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Century Collection, 18 August 1899.

<sup>5</sup> Inscribed copy of *Sailing Alone*, Wagnalls Memorial.

<sup>6</sup> Century Collection, 4 August.

<sup>7</sup> Century Collection. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Slocum is said to have corresponded with John Kendrick Bangs (1862-1922). Francis Hyde Bangs, the latter's son, wrote the present writer that a number of the captain's letters were sold to Goodspeed's, Boston, by Bangs's literary executors; that a copy of *Sailing Alone* inscribed from the skipper of the *Spray* to the skipper of *A Houseboat on the Styx* was also sold. Upon inquiry at Goodspeed's, it was learned that the items had been re-sold some years ago and no record kept as to the purchaser. Jessie Slocum Joyce, the captain's daughter, wrote that her father corresponded with Jack London. While the present writer has not been able to verify her statement, it is clear that the captain's exploit and book made a deep impression on the young San Franciscan. In the opening sentences of *The Cruise of the Snark*, explanatory of how he came to conceive of that fantastic enterprise, Jack London wrote: "We talked about small boats, and the seaworthiness of small boats. We instanced Captain Slocum and his three years voyage around the world in the *Spray*." Charmian London, in *Jack London*, London, 1921 (Vol. II, p. 81), wrote of Jack's reading Slocum aloud, and of his then remarking to Uncle Roscoe Eames: "If Slocum could do it alone . . . with an old tin clock for chronometer . . . why couldn't we do it in a ten foot longer boat with better equipment and more company!"

<sup>10</sup> Century Collection, 14 August 1899.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 August 1899. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 August 1899.

<sup>13</sup> Written from 184 Princeton Street, the home of Beatrice Elliott Ferguson, 30 October 1899, Century Collection.

<sup>14</sup> New York, undated, but in November 1899.

<sup>15</sup> 7 November 1899, p. 6. <sup>16</sup> 11 November, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> 13 November. <sup>18</sup> P. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Letter to the present writer from L. Francis Herreshoff, Marblehead, Mass.

## CHAPTER 18 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Letter, Grace Murray Brown.

<sup>2</sup> The contract, dated 18 September 1899, was the usual one. The author was to receive a royalty of 10 per cent of the retail price on the first 5,000 copies sold; 12½ per cent on the second 5,000; and 15 per cent

thereafter. However, on 18 October 1907, Slocum signed an amendment which limited the royalty to 12½ per cent regardless of number of copies sold. Joseph B. Gilder was a witness at the signing in 1899.

<sup>3</sup> The Century Company's agreement with Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., was made 2 June 1930. The latter firm obtained the right to sell a cheap edition for three years. They made three printings. The Century Company's printings were:

1st Printing	January, 1900	5,000 copies
2nd Printing	November, 1900	2,500 copies
3rd Printing	February, 1901	2,500 copies
4th Printing	May, 1905	1,500 copies
5th Printing	September, 1907	1,500 copies
6th Printing	February, 1911	2,500 copies
7th Printing	June, 1917	1,590 copies
8th Printing	January, 1919	1,500 copies
9th Printing	April, 1923	1,500 copies
10th Printing	October, 1925	1,540 copies
11th Printing	September, 1927	1,640 copies
12th Printing	March, 1930	1,000 copies
13th Printing	February, 1934	250 copies
14th Printing	February, 1935	610 copies
15th Printing	September, 1936	610 copies
16th Printing	September, 1937	1,020 copies
17th Printing	February, 1941	1,000 copies

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Fogarty (1873-1938) was born in New York, studied drawing and painting at the Art Students League, where from 1903-1922 he taught illustration, did much magazine and book work. Of the books he illustrated, perhaps the best known after *Sailing Alone* are Jacob August Riis' *The Making of an American* and *The Battle with the Slum*. George Edmund Varian (1865-1923) was born in Liverpool, England, studied at Brooklyn Art Guild and Art Students League, did his best-known work for *McClure's Magazine* and Ray Stannard Baker (pseud., David Grayson). Exhibited at Paris Salon, 1907.

<sup>5</sup> 184 Princeton St., E. Boston, 30 March 1900, Century Collection.

<sup>6</sup> E. Boston, 17 April 1900, Century Collection.

<sup>7</sup> The Spray, Bridgeport, Conn., 4 May 1900.

<sup>8</sup> Saturday Supplement, 7 April 1900, p. 240

<sup>9</sup> Reprinted in *Sloop Spray Souvenir*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> *The Nation*, 26 April 1900, p. 325.

<sup>12</sup> *Sloop Spray Souvenir*, inside back cover.

<sup>13</sup> It was not reprinted in England till 1948. In that year it was published

by Rupert Hart-Davis in a volume with *Voyage of the Liberdade*. Four printings followed. In 1949, The Reprint Society issued a special edition. In 1950, Pan Books, Ltd., issued a paperback edition with a first printing of 50,000 copies. Pan reprinted in 1953.

<sup>14</sup> *Sloop Spray Souvenir*, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> 1 July 1898, Century Collection.

<sup>16</sup> *The Confident Years*, New York, 1951, p. 233, footnote.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to the present writer.

<sup>18</sup> Spaeth, J. Duncan and Brown, Joseph E., *American Life and Letters*, Princeton, 1934.

<sup>19</sup> *Sloop Spray Souvenir*, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Rourke, Constance, *American Humor*, New York, 1955, p. 135.

<sup>21</sup> *Song of Myself*. Quoted by Constance Rourke, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>22</sup> Letter, Herbert L. Coggins, San Francisco, California.

<sup>23</sup> There were two editions of the abridgment. One was printed by the Scribner Press and bound in institutional gray, uniform of the volumes in the "Scribner Series of School Reading." This edition omitted from the title page the words, "A Geographical Reader." The other, printed on better stock by the Caxton Press, and attractively bound in maroon, was also used by school districts. Both editions were illustrated and included a nice folding map at the back. Like most old school books, copies of both editions are now rather rare. For a copy of the gray, I am indebted to Mrs. Ella Thomas Cameron of Albury, N. S. W.

## CHAPTER 19 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Letter, East Boston, 1 November 1899, Century Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, East Boston, 30 March 1900, Century Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, New York, 27 February 1901 to Prof. O. T. Mason. Not cataloged, it is pasted in copy of *Sailing Alone*, Smithsonian Institution Library.

<sup>4</sup> "Analysis of Handwriting of Joshua Slocum," by Dr. Meta H. Steiner.

<sup>5</sup> For details of the Exposition, see *The Rand-McNally Hand-Book to the Pan-American Exposition*, Rand-McNally, Chicago, 1901. Also, Nicholls, Henry Mark, *Recollections of Pan American Exposition*, Lockport, N. Y., 1953.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett, Mark, *Bennett Illustrated Souvenir Guide Pan American Exposition*, Buffalo, 1901.

<sup>7</sup> P, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Clipping from a Buffalo paper, date and source unknown, loaned by J. Garfield Slocum.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, J. Garfield Slocum.

## CHAPTER 20 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Slocum, Captain Joshua, *Voyage of the Destroyer*, p. 32.
- <sup>2</sup> Century Collection.
- <sup>3</sup> Recorded in Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass., Deed Book 105, pp. 24, 232, 308. Deed Book 106, p. 234.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter, Dionis Coffin Riggs, West Tisbury, Mass.
- <sup>5</sup> Two letters from Slocum to Clifton Johnson (1865-1940) were loaned by the latter's widow, the late Mrs. Anna M. Johnson. She also loaned copies of the photographs taken by her husband.
- <sup>6</sup> October 1902.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter, Mrs. Grace Murray Brown.
- <sup>8</sup> 24 September 1903.
- <sup>9</sup> Pond, Major J. B., *Eccentricities of Genius—Memories of Famous Men and Women of the Platform and Stage*, New York, 1900, pp. 299-301.
- <sup>10</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, 4 December 1902. An inscribed copy of *Voyage of the Liberdade* presented to Victor was dated by the captain, "Boston Dec 29th 1902." In the upper left-hand corner on the title page he wrote: "We haven't been but two days out, when the duff it don't seem to please It hasn't the richness of raisins and sichness. And so we ups and we muteinies" In Boston, o., 3 January 1903, he bought a copy of Robert Burns' poems and presented it to a young relative, Marguerite Murray, "with best wishes of her Uncle Joshua."
- <sup>11</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, 15 January 1903.

## CHAPTER 21 NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Letter, Mrs. Grace Murray Brown.
- <sup>2</sup> Johnson, Clifton, "The Cook Who Sailed Alone," *Good Housekeeping*, February 1903.
- <sup>3</sup> For further recollections of Slocum by Vineyarders, see article by the present writer, "Any Word of Captain Slocum?" in the *Vineyard Gazette*, Edgartown, Massachusetts, 19 June 1953.
- <sup>4</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, 31 August 1905.
- <sup>5</sup> *Providence Journal*, 15 October 1905.
- <sup>6</sup> *Vineyard Gazette*, 9 November 1905.
- <sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, 23 November 1905. An article signed Haig Adadourian tells of a visit to Slocum in Menemsha, 1 November.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter to Professor Otis Tufton Ma'n (1838-1908), New York, 9 October 1900. "Have you published your paper on the drumming



of the South Seas, I miss a great deal that I shouldn't miss of publications," the navigator added in a postscript to his letter to the ethnologist. One of five Slocum letters in the files of the Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>9</sup> Date-lined "Boothbay Me June 21 1905," Smithsonian.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Slocum, Menemsha Creek, 7 November 1905, to Professor Richard Rathbun (1852-1918). Smithsonian. See also, Banks, Charles Edward, M.D., *History of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts*, Boston, 1911, Vol. II, p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Ernest J. Dean.

<sup>12</sup> *New Bedford Standard*, 10 September 1906. <sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

## CHAPTER 22 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *New Bedford Standard*, 10 September 1906. "Sloop Spray in Port . . ."

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Miller was head of the School of Industrial Arts which was located at Broad and Pine Streets.

<sup>3</sup> Sunday, 27 May 1906, p. 10, col. 3, "Say He Attacked Girl."

<sup>4</sup> *The New Era of Riverton and Palmyra, New Jersey*, 1 June 1906, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Burlington County Prison Register 1904-06*, Mt. Holly, N. J., "Name, Capt. Joshua Slocum; Charge, rape; When Received, May 26-06; When Discharged, dis July 6-06; Name of Committing Officer, Silas J. Coddington; Number of Days, 42."

<sup>6</sup> *A Model Jail of the Olden Time*, Designs for "A Debtors' Gaol and Work-House for Felons" for Burlington County, State of New Jersey, by Robert Mills, Architect. Philadelphia, May 1808. Summarized by Captain George J. Giger, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1928, 12 pp. In 1955, it was reputed to be the oldest county jail in use despite its condemnation for 25 years or more as unfit and unsafe. Mills (1781-1855), a disciple of Jefferson and Latrobe, was in 1836 appointed architect of public buildings in Washington. He designed the Treasury Building, Patent Office, Post Office Building, and the Washington Monument.

<sup>7</sup> *The Mount Holly News*, Mt. Holly, N. J., 10 July 1906, p. 3, col. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *The New Jersey Mirror*, Mt. Holly, N. J., 11 July 1906, p. 3, col. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Manuscript "Memorandum" for the present writer, by Archibald B. Roosevelt, 2 February 1953.

<sup>10</sup> Morison, Elting E., Editor, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, Vol. 5, p. 347; 3994 to Henry Cabot Lodge. Written from Oyster Bay.

<sup>11</sup> *New Bedford Standard*, 10 September 1906. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> Smithsonian files.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Frank A. Taylor, Head Curator Department of Engineering and Industries, Smithsonian, 27 October 1952.

## CHAPTER 23 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 30 March 1900. Century Collection.

<sup>2</sup> 7 April 1902. Century.

<sup>3</sup> 23 February 1900. Century. Slocum, ghosted, is quoted by Basil Lubbock in *Bully Hayes South Sea Pirate*, Boston, 1931, pp. 299-300.

<sup>4</sup> Slocum, Charles Elihi, M.D., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 481-4.

<sup>5</sup> Loaned by B. Aymar Slocum.

<sup>6</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 18. Victor wrote that Roosevelt asked Slocum to come to the White House at the end of the voyage in 1898, and that this conversation took place at that time. However, Roosevelt did not become president until 1901.

<sup>7</sup> Letter. Stanley P. Morris, Stonington, Connecticut.

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Mrs. Carroll W. Saley, West Barnstable, Massachusetts.

<sup>9</sup> Roosevelt, Archibald, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Letter. <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Century Collection. This is concluding item in it.

<sup>13</sup> Accession Card No. 5733.

<sup>14</sup> To Dr. Hermon Carey Bumpus (1862-1943). Transcript of letter sent by the American Museum of Natural History.

<sup>15</sup> 17 and 24 September 1908.

<sup>16</sup> Letter, Harold S. Smith, Port Washington, New York.

<sup>17</sup> *The Mirror of the Sea*, Chapter XXXIV.

## CHAPTER 24 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Letter loaned by B. Aymar Slocum.

<sup>2</sup> Slocum, Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> Letter.

<sup>4</sup> Letter published in *Vineyard Gazette*, 3 July 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Letter, *Vineyard Gazette*, 17 July 1953.

<sup>6</sup> Absentee Petition and Decree filed 22 April 1912, allowed 21 July 1913. Dukes County Court House, Edgartown, Mass., General Book 29, p. 432. Hettie was appointed receiver of the captain's assets which were listed as real estate and personal estate, the latter consisting of royalties due.

<sup>7</sup> Day, T. F., "On Capt. Joshua Slocum," *Yankee* magazine.

<sup>8</sup> Dukes County Court House, Book B, Vol. IV, p. 210.



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